The Last Guardian™

AN EXTRAORDINARY STORY

Trico

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The Last Guardian

AN EXTRAORDINARY STORY

The Last Guardian was a reflection on *ICO* and *Shadow of the Colossus*, or put more specifically, it was a project that began from reflecting on the long time spent making those games.

As I look back on the many years it took to complete *The Last Guardian*, I think of the many events that happened during its creation. In particular, I encountered many obstacles, twists, and turns during the three year period from 2012 to 2015, such as frequent reorganizations within Sony Interactive Entertainment's development studios, porting the game from one platform to another, and the establishment of genDESIGN, all of which stalled creative development on the game. As a result, it became an unexpectedly protracted project.

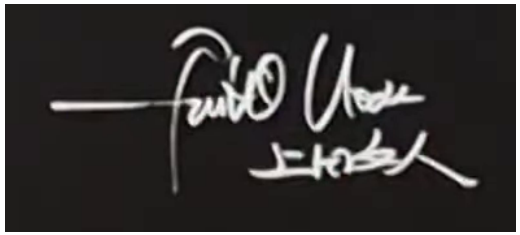
Along the way, I always knew that I had the ability to remove myself from the project, which of course I didn't exercise. Not only did I feel a deep sense of responsibility to the players who had been waiting for the game, but I also developed a strong emotional attachment to this imaginary creature named Trico, though it was often a love/hate relationship.

The Last Guardian was a project that encountered many hardships, but now it is out of my hands and this living beast, Trico, has left its nest. When I look online and see the reactions players have towards Trico, I'm glad that it was born. It would bring me joy to know that everyone involved in the project feels the same way.

I sincerely hope that those who have played the game will see this book as a fond reminder of their travels, and that those who have not yet played *The Last Guardian* will read this book and become interested in the game, even if just a little.

I would like to thank the staff of Future Press, as well as Ryan Payton who has supported me in many things. I’m also thankful to the top management of SIE for allowing me to work on a long-term project like this.

Finally, I hope that on the pages that follow you are able to retrace the nearly ten-year-long journey that the staff of genDESIGN and SIE JAPAN Studio walked with me.



It’s a crisp November morning, and we’re standing in the plaza of an office building in the Kōtō ward of Tokyo, Japan. Above us, countless rows of brightly-colored doors fill each floor, all the way up to the overcast sky above. One of these doors houses the small development studio genDESIGN, the creative force behind *The Last Guardian*—not quite where it began its development journey almost 10 years ago, but certainly where it will finish when it releases on PlayStation®4 in a mere two weeks.

We’d go on to spend the next two days playing through the entire game with most of the genDESIGN team watching—along with the members of Sony Interactive Entertainment’s JAPAN Studio, key collaborators in its execution—as we asked countless questions about the game’s inspirations, its enigmatic world, and its ambitious design. Like creator Fumito Ueda’s previous masterpieces, *ICO* and *Shadow of the Colossus*, not everything in *The Last Guardian* benefits from explanation. We still managed, however, to unearth a huge breadth of interesting insights from its development, which you’ll find over the course of this book, alongside beautiful artwork and screenshots from every stage of the game’s creation. We also dive into the theoretical connections that it shares with its predecessors, profile the incredible team that helped Ueda realize the game’s singular vision, and interview the luminary himself.

To be clear, this isn’t an exploration of the game’s infamously protracted development, but rather a celebration of its boundless beauty—not only that which is aesthetic in nature, but of the essence that lies at the very heart of its design. Spoilers lie shortly ahead, so make sure you’ve finished the game first. But once you have, please join us as we peek behind the scenes of *The Last Guardian*, bringing you inside this modern classic—at once a simple adventure about a boy and his beast, yet truly, An Extraordinary Story.

– The Future Press Team

Introduction: A Journey Worth Taking

by Ryan Payton

My first direct contact with Fumito Ueda was when I shot him in the face with an airsoft gun in rural Japan.

Videogame fans mostly recognize me from my time at Konami as a producer on *Metal Gear Solid 4*. As one of the few foreigners at the company, it was a rare opportunity to be integrated so deeply into the development of one of the biggest PlayStation®3 games ever to be released. My three years on the project felt like a waking dream—here I was, in the trenches, working eighty hour weeks with the creators behind one of the few games that truly changed my life. Even to this day, I think back to how lucky I was to have such unique access to the Japanese videogame industry, which is still about as elusive as it was ten years ago.

Thinking back to my time at Konami, I distinctly remember the day *Shadow of the Colossus* was released in October of 2005. I had just recently joined the *Metal Gear Solid 4* team and was still trying to make a positive impression on my colleagues. One of the artists on the team started playing it at his desk during lunch, and I couldn't help but be floored by what Fumito Ueda and the team had accomplished. It was an affirmation of a game—a bleak, violent, melancholy, confident sophomore effort that proved ICO was only the beginning. I remember wondering at the time what sort of person Fumito Ueda was and if I would ever get to meet him in person. But even if I did, what would I say?

Ryan Payton was producer of *Metal Gear Solid 4* and director of *Halo 4*. He left Microsoft Game Studios during *Halo 4*'s production to found Camouflaj, and went on to direct stealth-action game *République*.

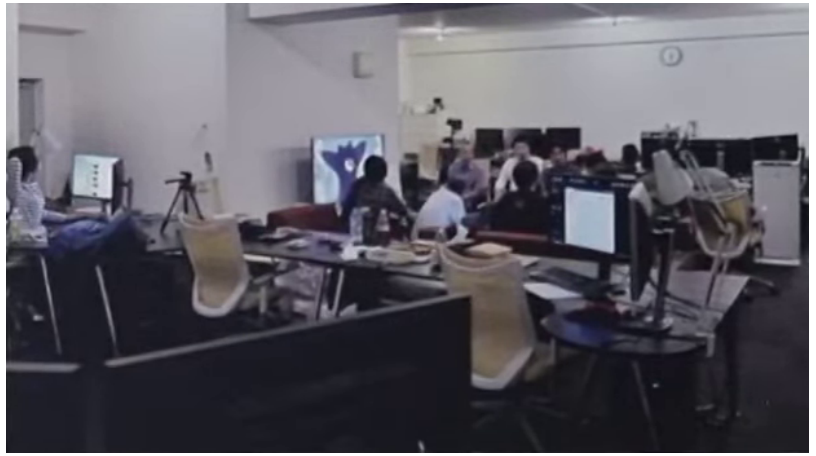
Just a few months later, I was invited to a semi-regular ‘survival game’—a gathering of industry people who spend whole Saturdays in the forest, dressed in fatigues, playing a very serious rendition of paintball. This was a common pastime of my *Metal Gear Solid 4* development colleagues (which should come as no surprise to fans of the series, given it’s hardcore military bent). When I showed up for my first survival game early Saturday morning at Hachiko in Shibuya, I was surprised to see that not only were developers from SQUARE ENIX and Sony getting into the bus, but that none other than Fumito Ueda himself was present.

Fast-forward four hours. I’m in a random Japanese forest, sweating from the stress and heavy fatigues, and I’ve got a replica M4 assault rifle at the ready, loaded with BBs. I was hungry for my first kill, and suspected somebody was on the opposite side of a blown-out building. With conviction—and a deep desire to impress my new airsoft brothers-in-arms—I quickly turned the corner and came face to face with an enemy combatant. We were both surprised, but only one of us panicked and pulled the trigger. The last thing I remember that day was Fumito Ueda covering his face in pain as I ran away. This was not how I imagined meeting one of the most revered game creators of all-time.

Shown here is Ueda’s desk and pinboard with key concept artwork pinned to it. A close-up of this pinboard appears on the page opposite.

Much to the surprise of everyone who knows that story (including myself), I have had the honor of working with Fumito on *The Last Guardian* over the past five years with his agent Ophir Lupu. We worked through his announcement of leaving Sony Interactive Entertainment, the painful decision to abandon development on PlayStation®3, the technical explorations of refactoring the game on new technology, the creation of genDESIGN, and the eventual piecing together of the game, one last time, to finally deliver *The Last Guardian* to fans on December 6, 2016.

Throughout the highs and lows of working together, I came to realize that Fumito is not only worthy of praise as a genius creator, but that he and the core team are men and women who never give up. By all accounts, Trico and the Boy should never have survived development—a project so fraught with turmoil that only the most dedicated, patient, and thoughtful creator could ever endure as many prolonged setbacks. Despite incredible odds, Fumito led a group that kept coming back, for thousands of workdays, to finally will *The Last Guardian* into existence.

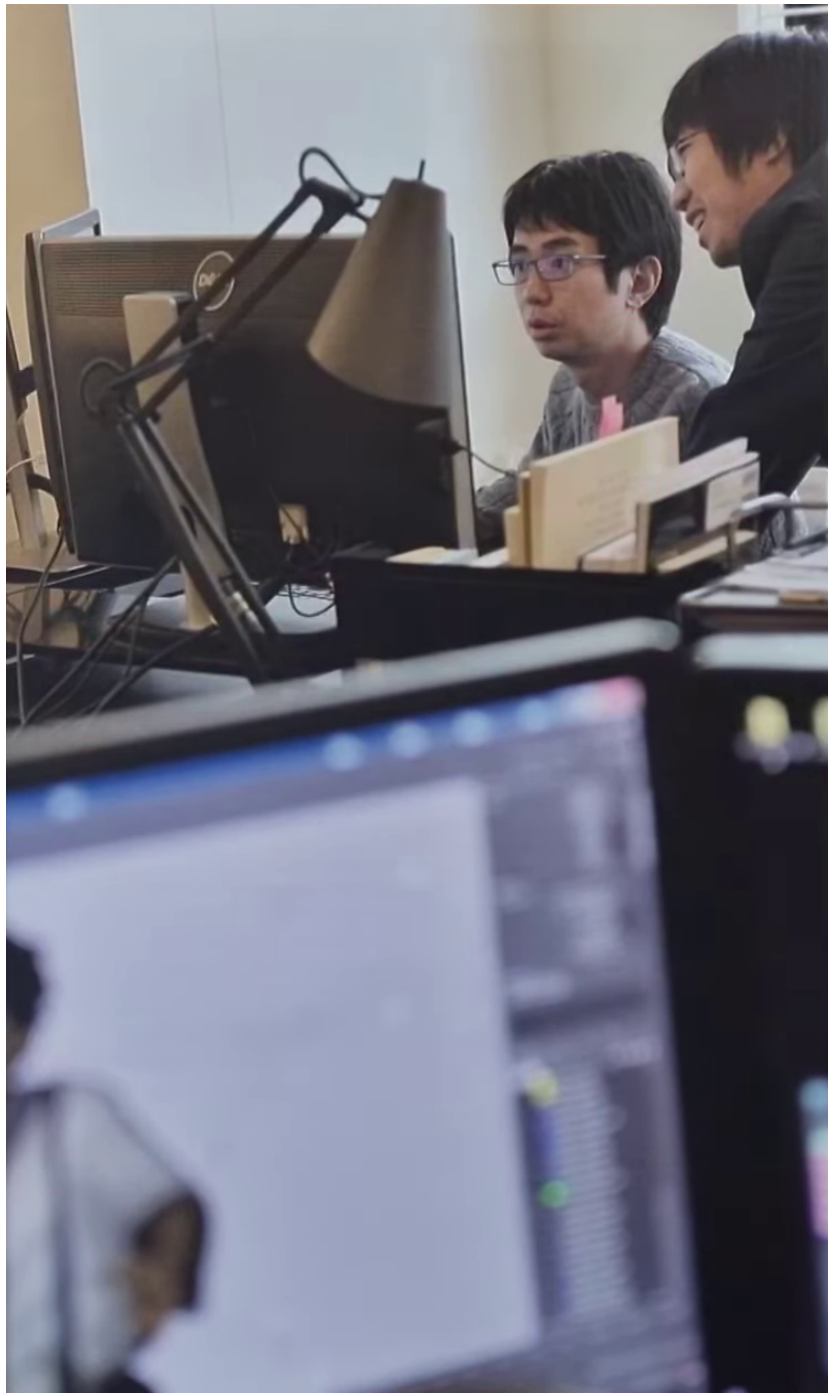


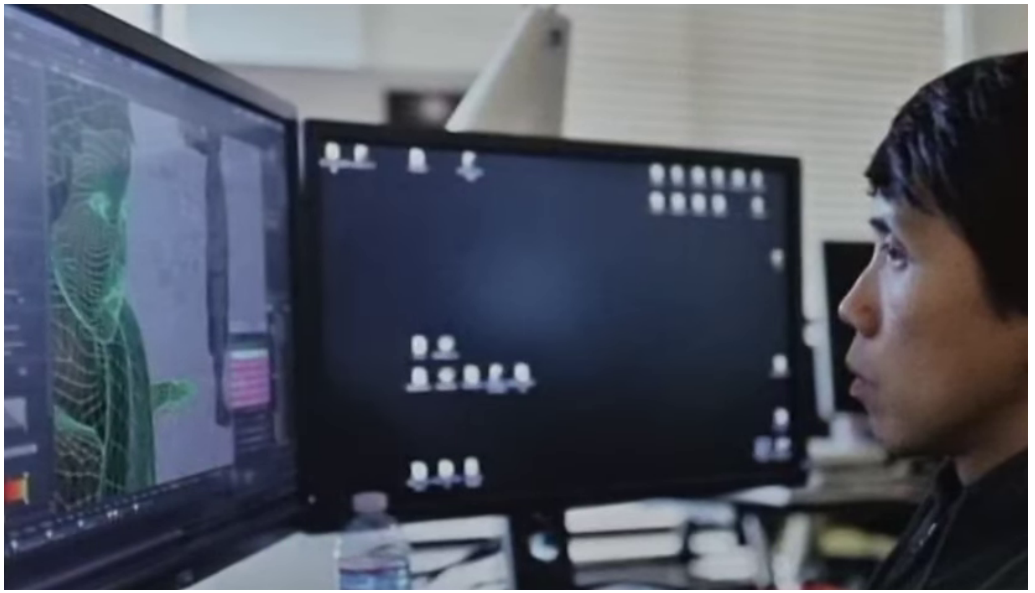
These small figures are actually 3D printouts made by a friend of Ueda's who owns a 2D printer—Ueda gave him some 3D models to print out and these now sit in front of genDESIGN's TV screen.

While in town for Tokyo Game Show 2016, I had the honor of spending a day at genDESIGN to play through the game in its entirety, and will never forget the overwhelming emotion I felt after the credits rolled and final scene had ended. I felt a powerful conviction that *The Last Guardian* was not only about a boy and mythical beast named Trico, but a metaphor for Fumito and his development comrades. While death was very much a theme in *Shadow of the Colossus*, I'm pleased that *The Last Guardian* ended on a note of hope, that life goes on. Trico, from the very first scene, is a sympathetic creature that, despite its wild and sometimes frustrating nature, players end up fighting for and never giving up on. Much like Trico, I'm relieved that Fumito, his team, and Sony Interactive Entertainment stuck with the game until the end. We're all better for it. And if there's any truth to my theory, then the ending scene makes it clear that the journey doesn't end with Trico—that there are new adventures on the horizon.

The gorgeous book you hold in your hands is from the talented group at Future Press, who went through their own incredible journey to bring it to print. Like a microcosm of my five years in Japan, Frank and company were the beneficiaries of Japanese people's world-renowned hospitality, and were given unprecedented access to Fumito, genDESIGN, and the core development group at JAPAN Studio. Inspired by the arduous, passionate, and detail-oriented legacy of *The Last Guardian's* development, the team at Future Press and *Shadow of the Colossus* expert Nick Suttner have created a companion book worthy of standing beside the game. Like the game itself, I hope they look back at its creation as a journey worth taking.

–Ryan Payton (April 2017)





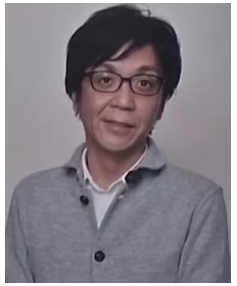
Fumito Ueda – Director

What did you do on the game?
I did game design and game direction.

What are you most proud of in the game?
That it's such a unique game.

Your favorite moment in the game?
The last part of the ending, that final jump command.

Your favorite game?
I'm currently playing *Prince of Persia* on the PC, and *Flashback*. Also *Virtua Fighter*. What they all have in common is character animations: the player acts, and it takes effect through the characters' animations.



Jinji Horagai – Executive Producer

What did you do on the game?
I was the producer.

What are you most proud of in the game?
Having been able to create something alive like Trico. It feels like a creature that actually exists, in a story that can only be told through the medium of videogames.

Your favorite moment in the game?
When the Boy climbs onto Trico's back, I like how Trico turns its head to face the Boy.

Your favorite game?
Galaxian, Pinball Construction Set, MYST.

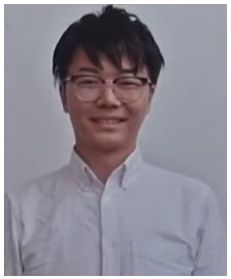
Masanobu Tanaka – Lead Game Designer & Lead Animator

What did you do on the game?
I joined JAPAN Studio during *Shadow of the Colossus* as an animator working on player animations and was Lead Animator on *The Last Guardian*. I've moved towards procedural animation during this project, because that was required for Trico to work. When I joined genDESIGN my role was expanded to include some writing and working on general tech, and on effects, such as Trico's feathers.

What are you most proud of in the game?
The combination of the technical and procedural side of Trico with the Boy's character. The way that they work together and come to life. I'm also really happy with the ending.

Your favorite moment in the game?
Well, the ending… When Trico eats the Boy with the intention of saving him. It's connected to the game's name in Japanese, '*The Great Man-Eating Eagle Trico*.'

Your favorite game?
The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time.



Yutaro Sakai – Character Art Director

What did you do on the game?
I joined genDESIGN just after E3 2015 and have assisted Ueda with the art direction, making sure that the game looks as good as possible. From a distance, the game looks great, but when you get up close you can sometimes notice a lack of detail, so much of my time was spent trying to increase the quality of the models to improve this.

What are you most proud of in the game?
I'm most proud of the smaller details, like the way Trico's eyes react to light. I worked closely with Ueda to make sure that when natural light hits the eyeball it makes the proper type of reflection. And that there's the right impression of moisture at the bottom of Trico's eyelids, for example. Going back and forth with Ueda on these small things was a highlight for me.

Your favorite moment in the game?
After the Boy crawls through the hole and you emerge and see the outside world for the first time. I really enjoy the way the lighting works and the feeling it gives.

Your favorite game?
Shadow of the Colossus. I'm 28 years old now, and *The Last Guardian* was announced when I was about 20, so the fact that I was able to work on it was an amazing opportunity that I'm glad I had.

Shunpei Suzuki – Environment Art Director

What did you do on the game?
I fleshed out a lot of the original ideas, things that came from Ueda like basic sketches or just words on a page, interpreting them into a 3D environment. I was focused on things you could see in the game.

What are you most proud of in the game?
The Sentinel Tower. Making that was a huge undertaking. At first it was very simple, but I remade the whole thing as a high-polygon model. It's such a central part of the game, and when I see it I'm really proud of it.

Your favorite moment in the game?
The tricos flying towards you as the sun rises—it's a dark, unsettling feeling and that's something I haven't really seen before in Ueda's games, and I was really impressed by it.

Your favorite game?
The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time. I really connected with the mood of that game. Also *Borderlands 2* and *Gears of War*.

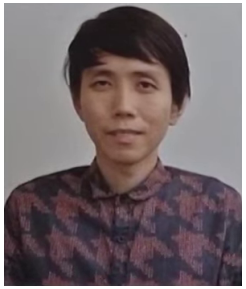
Masami Tanji – Scenario Writer

What did you do on the game?
I helped with the scenario and the graphics all around. I started the script and worked with the dialogue. I also worked on camera layout for the cutscenes, and the lighting and cloud effects.

What are you most proud of in the game?
The graphics, especially when you go outside the ruins for the first time. I think that feeling of liberation is wonderful.

Your favorite moment in the game?
I remember how suddenly the game gained a sense of reality when we were able to put in the sitting action when you press the left stick in. With the spectacular backgrounds, you can sit anywhere in the game and it becomes a beautiful picture.

Your favorite game?
Adventure games from the 8-bit era. *Wizardry, Virtua Fighter, NiGHTS into Dreams*…



Tan Se Ri – Lead Animator

What did you do on the game?
I worked on the characters' in-game animation, as well as the cutscenes.

What are you most proud of in the game?
The world, which feels like a living and breathing character in itself. Every time I walk through it, I can't help but imagine the history of it, the people who built it, those who lived in it, and what will happen to it. It's a world that encourages imagination.

Your favorite moment in the game?
One of the last scenes that I animated on was for the Boy, near the end where he has to give Trico the command to leave the village. It was added in towards the end of the production, so to me personally, it felt like an appropriately bittersweet way for me to end my part on the game.

Your favorite game?
Panzer Dragoon Zwei, *NiGHTS into Dreams…*, *Contra Hard Corps*, *ICO*, *Shadow of the Colossus*.

Sei Imai – Project Manager

What did you do on the game?
Project manager.

What are you most proud of in the game?
Having been able to guide the project to completion safely.

Your favorite moment in the game?
The ending. There's a narrative and directional meaning, and it was also a difficult part to complete, so I feel a very deep emotion after seeing what was accomplished.

Your favorite game?
FINAL FANTASY IV, *Dragon Quest V*, *Mother 2*, *Legend of Zelda (A Link to the Past* and *Breath of the Wild)*.

Jo Yamaya – Lead Environment Artist

What did you do on the game?
Created the background parts, components and models.

What are you most proud of in the game?
I like that Trico can properly climb or jump up on even complex terrain and walk around on it.

Your favorite moment in the game?
Just riding on Trico and jumping together.

Your favorite game?
Japanese RPGs like *The Legend of Heroes*.

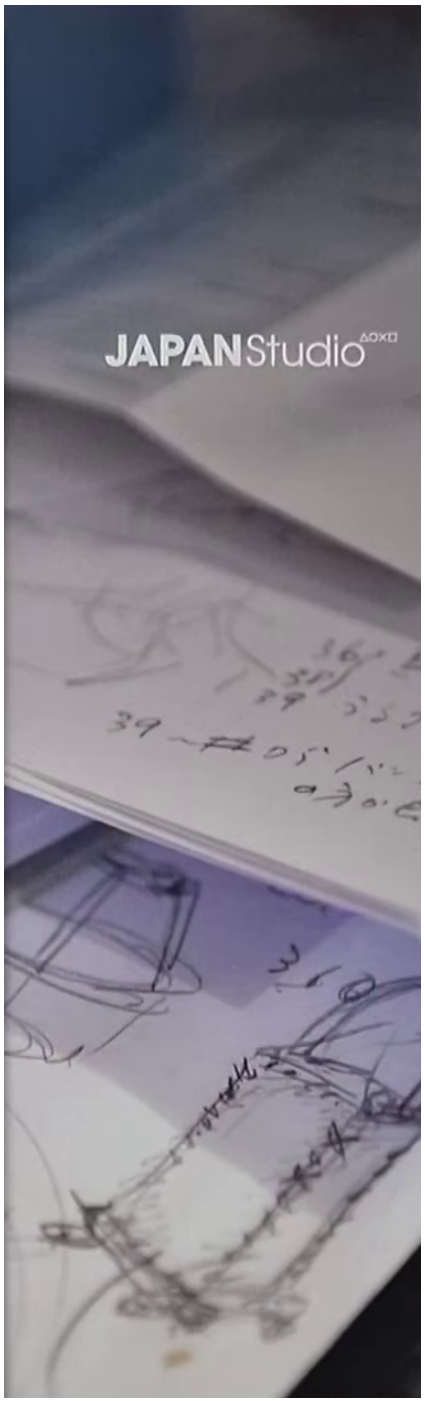
Ryouma Ikeda – Associate Project Manager

What did you do on the game?
As the Associate Project Manager I was responsible for assisting in all aspects of the project. I did things like compile the meeting minutes, serve as the contact person for outside contractors and created resources and documentation.

What are you most proud of in the game?
This was an experience like no other. Everyone has had a different experience with Trico, and these rich memories will remain for a long time.

Your favorite moment in the game?
From the scene where Trico flies from the two towers, to the scene where you fight a lot of Yoroi at once. Seeing the player's heart communicate with Trico's, that's an extremely refined experience that we managed to express through the game.

Your favorite game?
Mother 2 and *Mother 3*.



Suchol Lee – Lead Game Designer

What did you do on the game?
I'm Lead Designer at JAPAN Studio, so my job was to collaborate with Ueda, hear what his vision was, and then to realize that vision (inside JAPAN Studio) by working across all different departments and pipelines, whether it's animation, AI or environment.

What are you most proud of in the game?
For me, it's a combination of the programming skill and the animation and the feel of Trico. That it feels like a living creature—when you're up high and there's low ceilings and Trico will duck down, and it'll be careful where it puts its feet—those little parts combine to create the feeling that it's really a breathing creature. That's something I'm still really proud of when I look at it today.

Your favorite moment in the game?
The last part where Trico eats the Boy and flies off. That's the scene that connected with me the most. When I first saw it I felt myself tearing up.

Your favorite game?
Super Mario Bros. 3 and *ICO*.

Matoko Izawa – Lead Programmer

What did you do on the game?
I started off during the PlayStation®3 era, mostly focused on graphics and rendering. When the game moved to PlayStation®4 the systems programmer wasn't available, so I took on that role, and then as development went on I became Lead Programmer.

What are you most proud of in the game?
Speaking as a programmer, it's the way everything came together. The game had many different elements, and bringing them together into a functional thing that people can enjoy—I'm extremely proud of that now. A lot of the expressionistic aspects of the game, like the destruction—seeing those is a big part of what I'm really proud of. And the final scene [when the tricos are fighting]. I'm really happy that we could fully realize it.

Your favorite moment in the game?
Lots of things. It's hard to pinpoint one thing, but how the plant life moves and feels realistic in the environment is something that really sticks with me, and also the play of light and shadow I think is really well done. In terms of favorite area, earlier on in the game, there's a forest with trees and a staircase you go up…that's my favorite area.

Your favorite game?
Panekit.

Atsuhiko Terada – Lead Technical Artist

What did you do on the game?
I'm one of the rare beasts that worked on *The Last Guardian* since the beginning, and also worked on *Shadow of the Colossus* as an environment artist. I started messing around with *Maya* to develop my technical prowess, and as the game started maturing I would work with Ueda to realize his vision. Having worked with different directors in the past, Ueda is a very different type of person who, for example, is really good at 3D modeling—most people don't know that. Supporting him is something I really enjoyed.

What are you most proud of in the game?
There were a lot of individual challenges and problems that we were able to overcome—with a smaller strike team thinking 'how are we ever going to do this thing,' and then talking it through and trying out things, and then being able to realize it in the game and having lots of those little victories. Also Trico's feathers—prototyping those and making sure it all looks good—that was a big challenge.

Your favorite moment in the game?
The areas where you're up high and can look down and get that sense of vertigo, and feel the wind on your face, those are the moments that I really love.

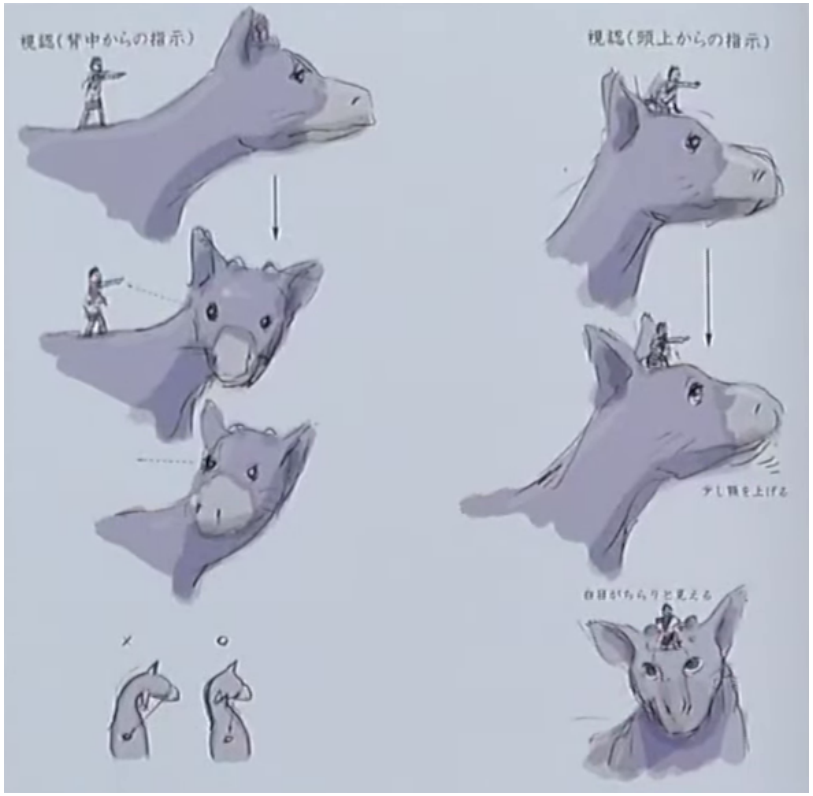
Your favorite game?
Age of Empires II.

Gryphus
Wasser Ochs
Grÿps

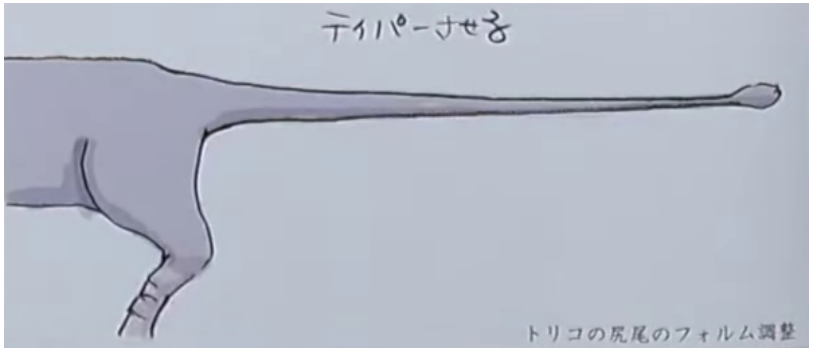
Trico

Height: 5.8m | **Length:** 16.5m
(Tail: 7.6m)

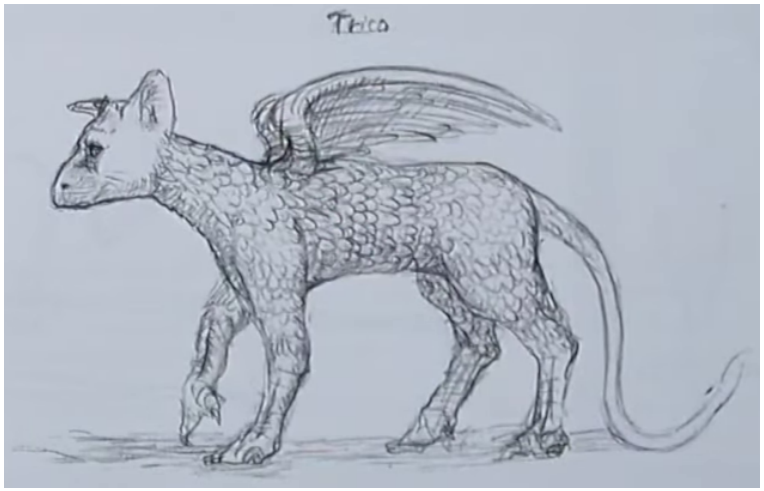
Trico, the Great Man-Eating Eagle, as it's known in the Japanese title of the game. As stalwart a videogame companion there's ever been, both the crowning technical achievement and the emotional heart of the adventure. There's never a moment when Trico feels anything short of real, which is part of what drove our intense curiosity about its biology, its behavior, and its mythology within the mysterious world of *The Last Guardian*.



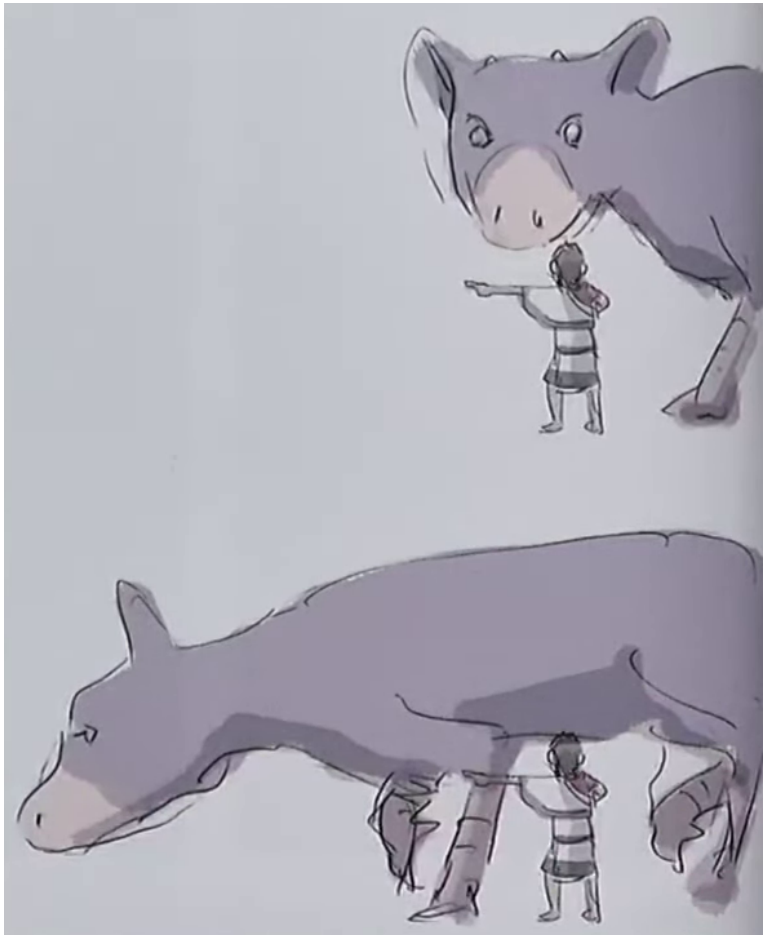
The image above describes how Trico's line of sight works when the Boy is on top of the creature. Even when standing on the beast's back or head, if Trico turns its head to the Boy or lifts its chin a little then it will register a command from the Boy. If you see a little of the whites of Trico's eyes in these positions that's another indication that Trico can see the Boy.



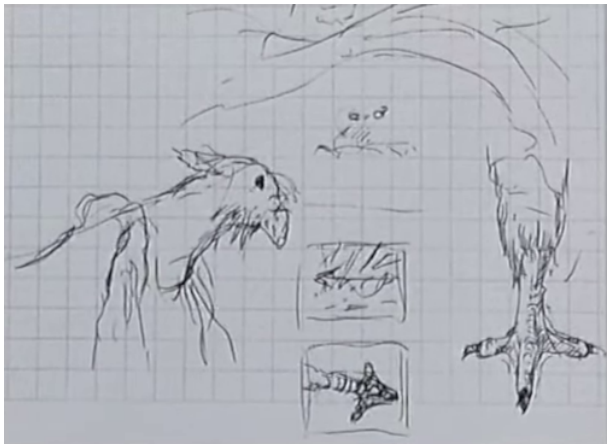
Trico's model is made up of **47,253 polygons**, excluding its plumage.
The plumage (20,420 feathers) is made of an additional **337,691 polygons**.

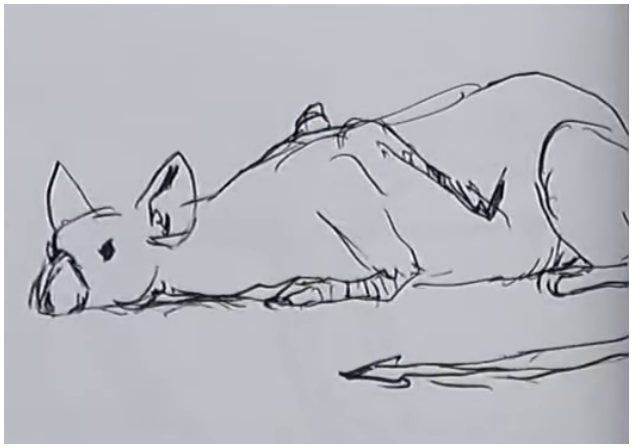


While sometimes referred to as a bird, a cat, or a griffin depending on where you look, Trico is actually part of a species all its own—one of many 'tricos,' or 'ōwashi' ('great eagle') in Japanese—taking inspirations from several different animals. "The image shouldn't be that of a so-called 'kaijū' [a large monster in the vein of Godzilla]," Ueda tells us, "but instead should be an animal with a mystique, while at the same time be real enough that you could think it's an animal that actually exists."



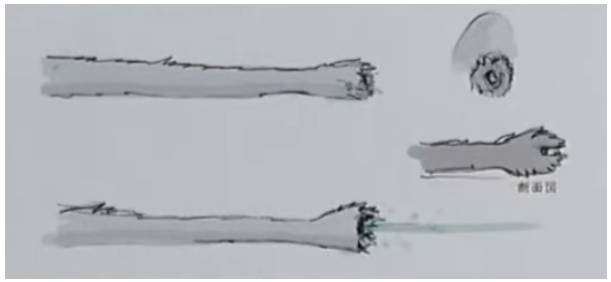
In terms of animation reference (Trico has 2,586 in-game and cutscene animations) the development team looked most closely at cats, studying their anatomy by watching videos online. This is easy to see if you've ever spent time around a cat, from the way Trico stretches, to how its tail moves with a mind of its own, to the way Trico picks up the Boy by the neck of his tunic, just as a mother cat would carry a kitten by its scruff.



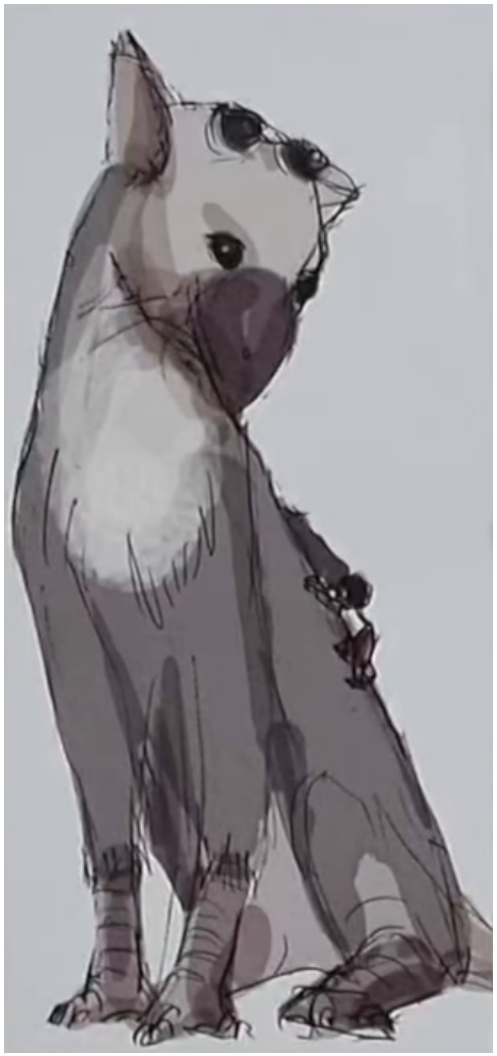


The team had originally brought the cat influence to Trico’s face too, in the shape of its nose and whiskers, but it proved to be a technical challenge so they went with something more similar to a bird’s beak. In the case of Trico’s regenerating tail, the inspiration came from lizards who possess that same talent naturally.

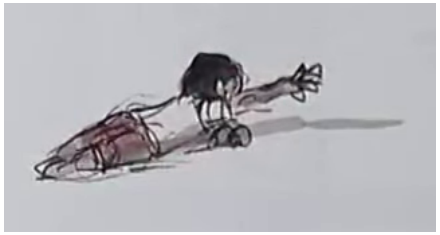
The myriad sounds uttered by Trico are even more of a hybrid, a melange of various kinds of animals, human voices, objects rubbing against each other, even the sound of a car’s engine. “All sounds you couldn’t imagine just from looking at Trico’s appearance,” explains Ueda.



Unlike most videogame companions, Trico doesn’t always respond instantly to commands, and very much has a mind of its own be design. That balance of obedience versus free will was a constant struggle for the team, but its success is evident in the sheer believability of Trico as an independent entity. “It’s intentional that there’s no way to perfectly guide Trico,” Tanaka tells us. “One of the things I’m most proud of is how the AI shines through the dynamic animations that Trico expressed throughout the game.”



There are a couple of very interesting interactions that you won’t ever see in the game, as they were cut due to quality issues—as recently as the summer of 2016, mere months before the game’s release. One of these involved the Boy finding a special plant that he could use to get Trico’s attention—a green foxtail, or ‘nekojarashi’ in Japanese, literally meaning ‘playing with a cat.’



There are several more rare behaviors that players may encounter after enough time with Trico, such as falling asleep in some of the game's sunnier spots (especially if you pet it around them), or even catching it in the act of pooping. (For more…adventurous players, you can even pick up the resulting squishy blob and carry it around—it looks like the same mysterious digestive slime that covers the Boy in the beginning of the game, but the team tell us that it's actually not the same.)

Players are told that petting Trico in different places elicits different responses. If you're petting Trico to calm it down after a stressful moment, petting its head is the most effective, and petting gets less effective as you progress towards the area just before the tail, which is least effective. As the game progresses and the relationship with Trico grows, it will take less time for it to return to a state of calm. (You can also smooth Trico's feathers and clean off the dirt and blood by petting them!)

The Boy

Height: 1.12m

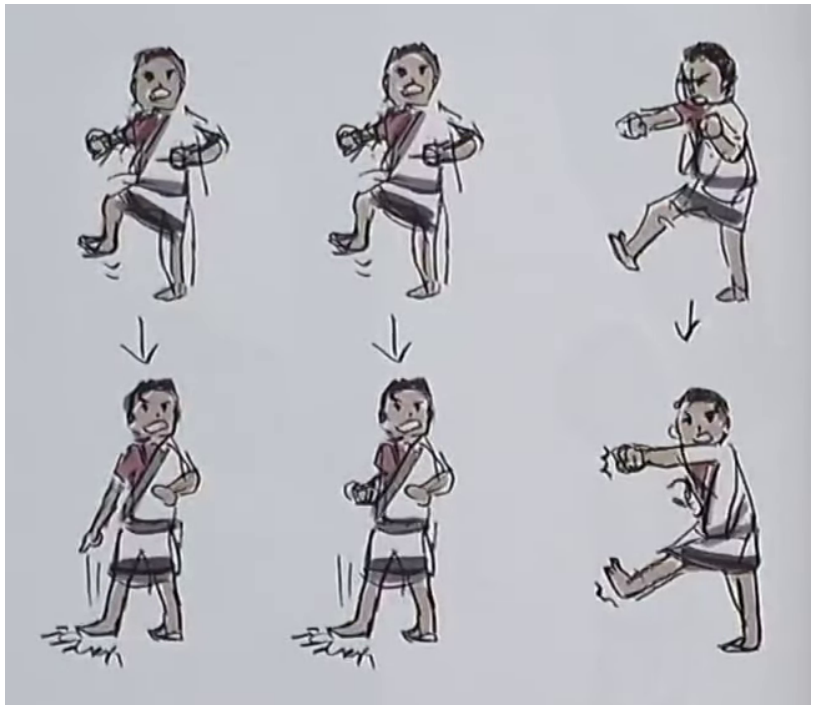
Like the characters in Ueda's previous two games, our young protagonist finds himself far from his village on an epic quest with an interdependent companion. Though unlike his counterparts he wasn't fated for that purpose—rather, he was a regular boy, taken from his village in the night, becoming one of the 'chosen ones.'

The Boy can be seen holding a feather in the game's box art image. In another removed interaction the Boy could, at one stage in development, pick up and hold one of the feathers that fell off of Trico, using it to glide to lower platforms.

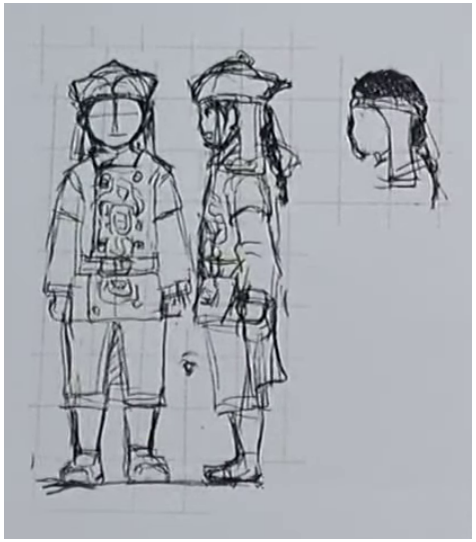
While the Boy is never overtly given a name, even in the end credits (as Ueda's other games have done for their protagonists), his name is spoken in his native language sometime during the game. Listen closely, and remember that he's one of the chosen ones.

The Boy's model is made up of **28,842 polygons** for the body, and another **24,988** for the edge luminescence effect. A further **9,286 polygons** are used for his clothes and creating the fluffiness effect of the cloth. The Boy's total polygon count is **63,116**.

Fans of Ueda's previous games may initially be surprised to find that the R1 button isn't used to make the Boy 'grip' Trico's feathers, as it was in *Shadow of the Colossus* to climb your foes, and before that in *ICO* to grab and hold Yorda's hand—both primary physical interactions in the worlds of those games. In face, it worked this way too in *The Last Guardian* until "the very end of production," Tanaka tells us. The team found that it was challenging for some players to jump and then grab, so in the spirit of making the game more accessible to a wider audience, gripping was changed to be automatic.



There are other, more subtle considerations for casual players in the final game, such as an 'edge wobble' animation that makes the Boy flail his arms near ledges, indicating to players that they are close enough to the edge to guarantee that a jump can be completed successfully. Earlier in development, the team even experimented with a 'player assistance' system that would automatically run and jump the Boy forward if players attempted a jump anywhere within reason.



We asked the team to translate some of the things that the Boy yells out to Trico, besides its name, and while they wouldn't tell us specific lines, they told us to "imagine what you might say when talking to your pet, like 'come here!,' 'do that!' or 'over there!'." Players may also notice variations of the lines depending on how far the Boy is from Trico, or—in some of the Boy's most charming moments—emphatically whispering when he's in the dark.

Eagle-eyes players may notice that the Boy's tattoos are growing and evolving over the course of the game (up to eight levels of growth, in fact, as displayed in sequence in the image above) and even show up during the ending when the Boy is shown as an older man. This change is actually dynamic throughout the game, directly related to how often the Boy is grabbed by enemies (and also each time he is swallowed by Trico). So the most careful players will see little change in the tattoos, while less skilled play will yield more 'battle scars.'

Just like Trico's horns, wings, and tail grow back to full strength over the course of the game, the Boy has a few small changes of his own during the adventure—in typical fashion for a young boy, the bottoms of his feet get dirtier throughout, along with his clothes. The original plan was for his clothes to get cleaned when the Boy went into water, but it didn't make it into the final game (though you'll still see them get wet and then dry over time, along with his hair).

The Yoroi

Height: 1.77-1.8m

The Last Guardian's creepy, single-mindedly-stumbling, glowing-eyed, possessed suits of armor are more formally known as Yoroi—from the Japanese word 'yoroi,' simply meaning 'armor.' (Note: they are referred to as 'soldiers' in the end credits of the English version of the game, but are called Yoroi in the Japanese subtitles.)

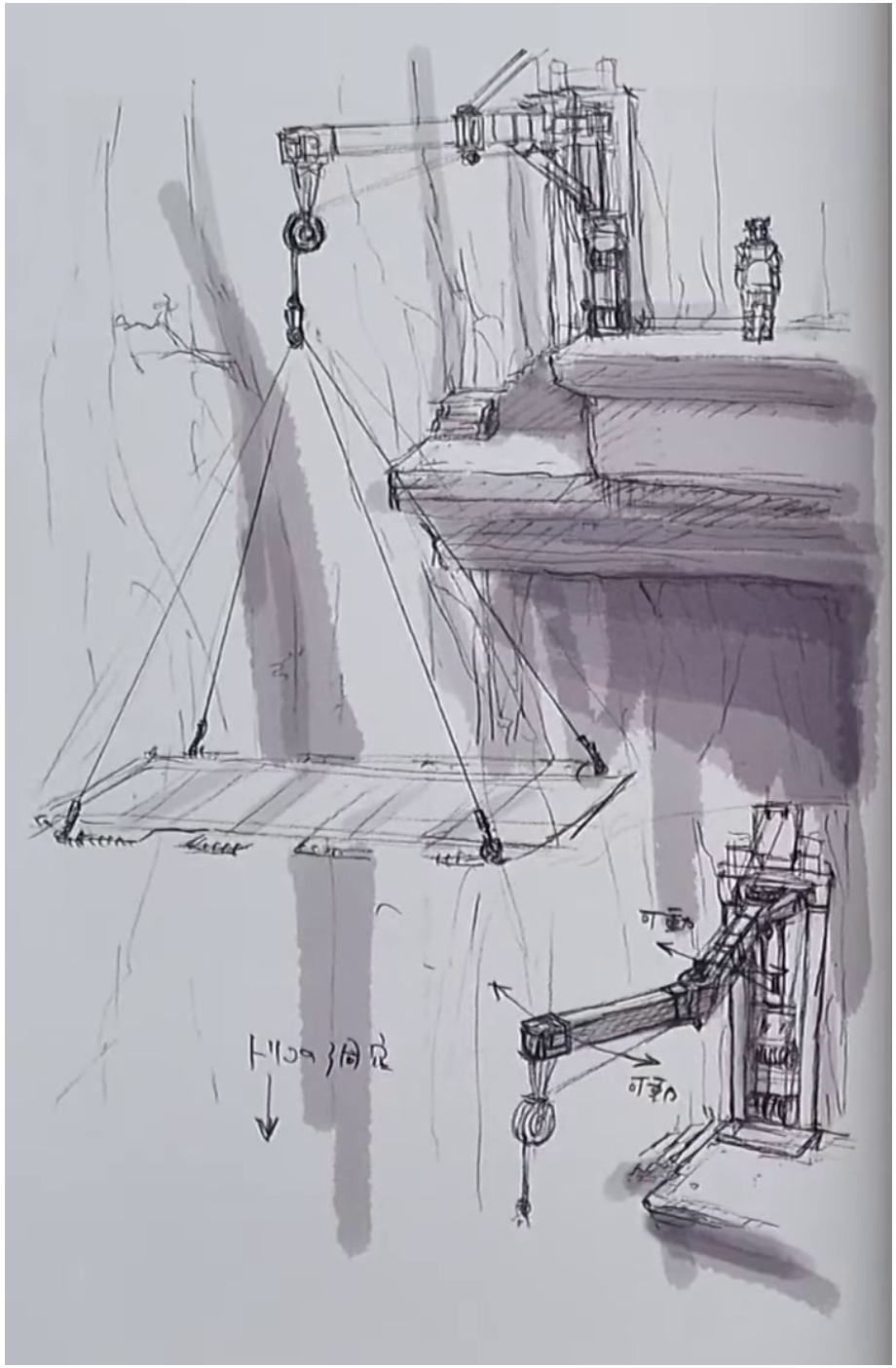
It can be easy to miss, but there are several variations of Yoroi throughout the game, changing from green-tinted, to blue-tinted, and finally to red-tinted, each with slightly more armor to indicate their strength. Each type requires progressively more time to escape its grasp once grabbed, and while green Yoroi can be disposed of with one swipe from Trico, blue and red are merely knocked to the ground (note that Trico will attack active Yoroi before fallen ones, so the quickest path to victory involves first commanding Trico to attack them, then using the Boy to pull off their helmets while they're down). The symbols that fill the screen when the Boy is captured are also progressively bigger according to the Yoroi's type.

Type 1 13,962 polygons **Type 2** 14,872 polygons **Type 3** 13,280 polygons **Type 4** 27,036 polygons

There’s a special fourth type of Yoroi found only within the lower level of the Sentinel Tower near the end, called ‘sanagi,’ which translates to ‘pupa’ or ‘chrysalis.’ These Yoroi are earlier in their evolution, more lightly shaded and less armored. “It’s related to a metamorphosis process, like how cicadas molt and their skin is still soft when they emerge,” Tanaka tells us. “Once they ‘harden’ they become one of the three different soldier types.” This is part of an interesting insectoid theme that can be found throughout the game (especially as it relates to bees), picked up upon and theorized further by some observant fans.

Similar to the trico creatures, the Yoroi are controlled by the Core through their horns, which act like antenna (and do have some sense of consciousness, according to Ueda). Originally the design of their horns appeared different, but were changed by Sakai—on the suggestion of Ueda—to look more like Trico's horns, matching their visual design. Another element of their design that was changed involves the essence that inhabits the armor, making it come to life: originally it was more of a black shadow, like those that appear both in *ICO* and *Shadow of the Colossus*, but was changed to appear closer to the mysterious blueish-green essence contained within the barrels found throughout the game. "There's some kind of connection from a design concept standpoint," Tanji tells us.

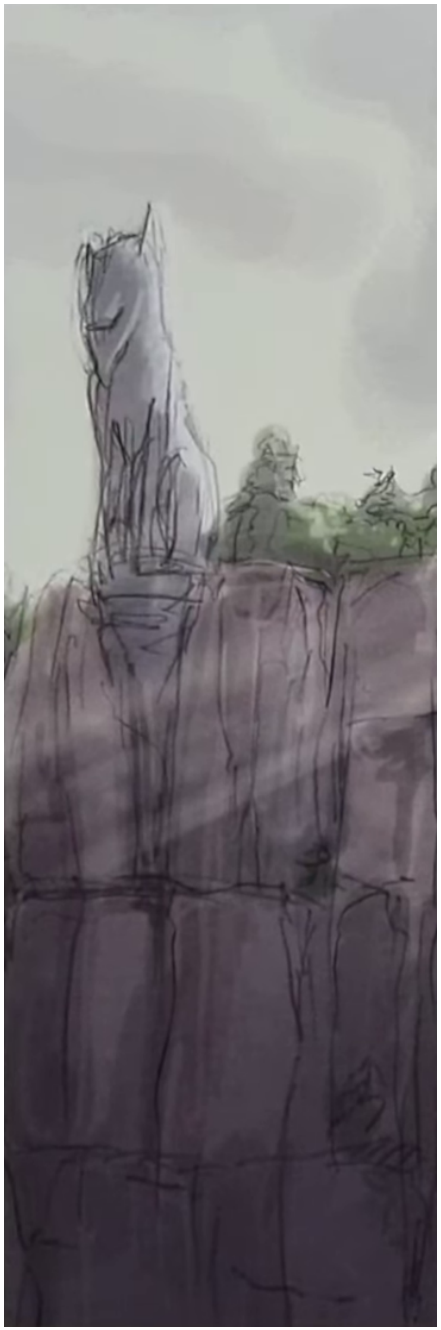
The Yoroi are the greatest scourge throughout the journey, attacking Trico with swords and spears, while endeavoring to carry the Boy to his doom through mysterious blue doors. The Yoroi also maintain the Valley, and are seen during a cutscene to be transporting the fallen Trico to the cave where it's chained before the events of the game begin.

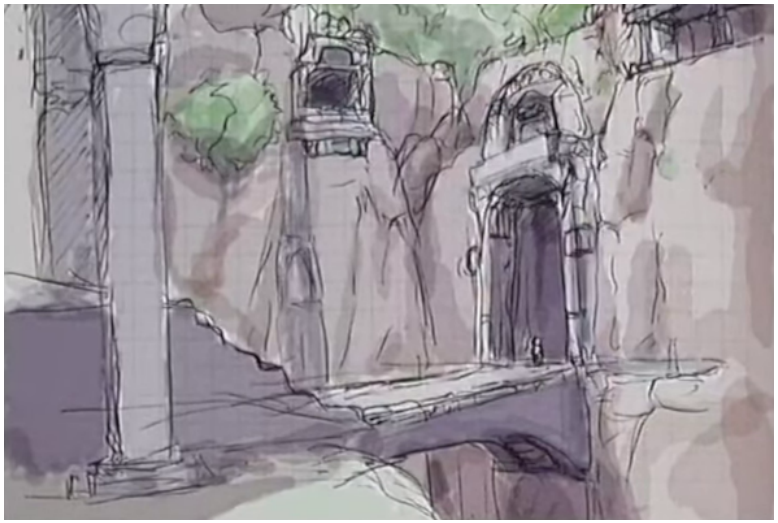


At times when the Yoroi can’t reach the Boy, they will instead stand still, bow their hands and heads as if praying, and project a series of strange symbols at him—the same symbols that must be banished from the screen to respawn through a tunnel of light after dying. Their design is cheekily inspired in part by the Circle, Square, Triangle and X buttons on a DUALSHOCK®4 wireless controller. Tanaka explains to us: “It’s best to think about it as a ‘noroi’ [in English, curse].”

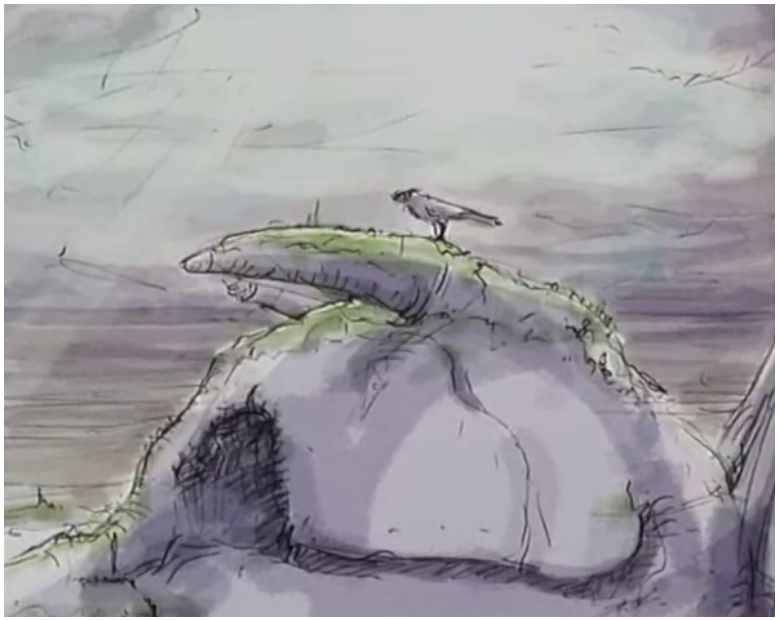
The Valley

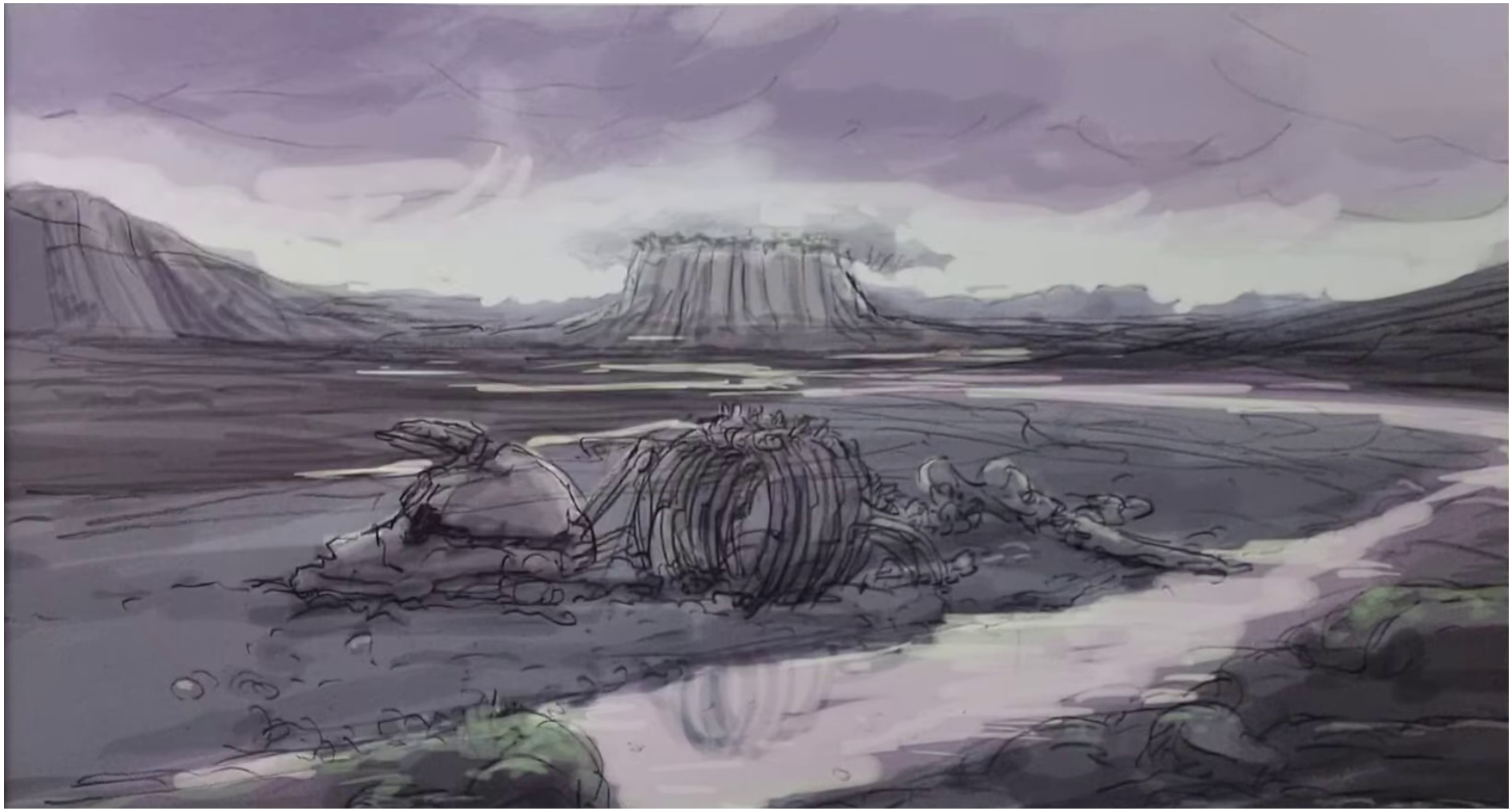
Little is shown of the wider world of the game, beyond the crater that houses the Nest, and the Boy's village, but we're told that it's an "extreme distance" that Trico flies between them. The Valley itself is worth a closer look, though—its makeup and history are the subject of much theorizing among players who want to take a deep look at the game's setting.



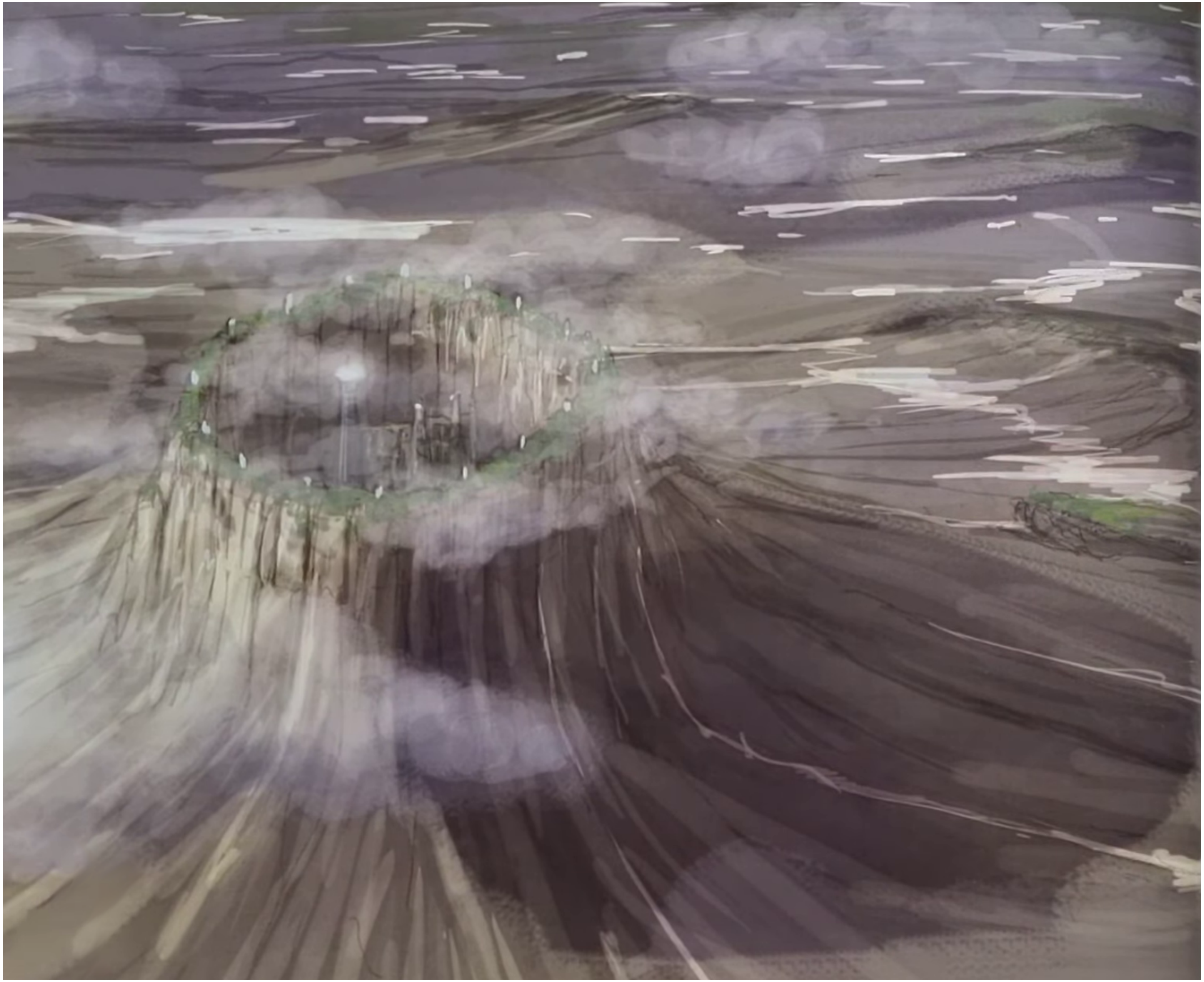


There's some open interpretation as to what exactly is referred to as the 'Nest' and the 'Valley' in the game; the former applies to the entire crater and all of the structures within it—the 'Nest' that the trico return to—while the latter is more conceptual, like how one would describe an oasis, not necessarily a literal Valley.



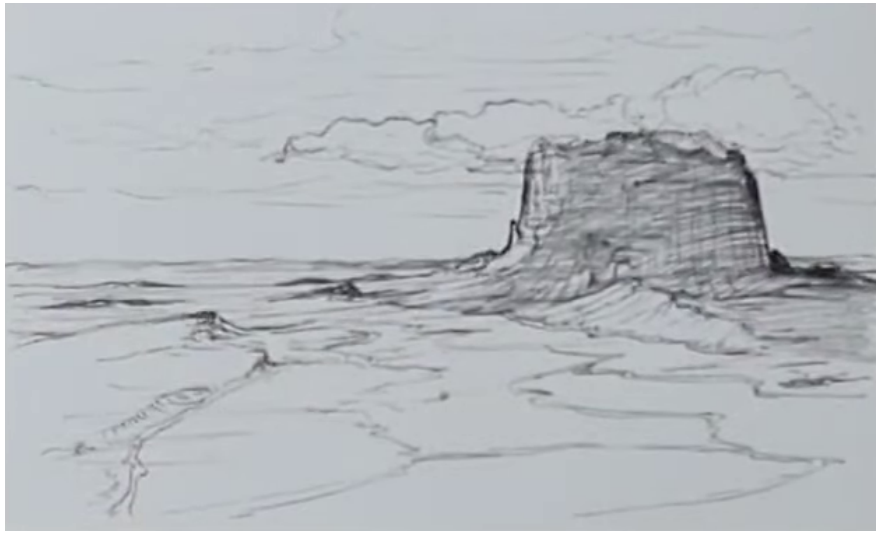


The team created many sketches of skeletons of the tricos, so we asked if they were planned to be used in the game. “Yes,” Ueda says, “the skeletons were strewn around the perimeter of the Valley, and we had planned them to appear in the shot where Trico flies away in the ending. However, because of time limitations we eventually cut them.”

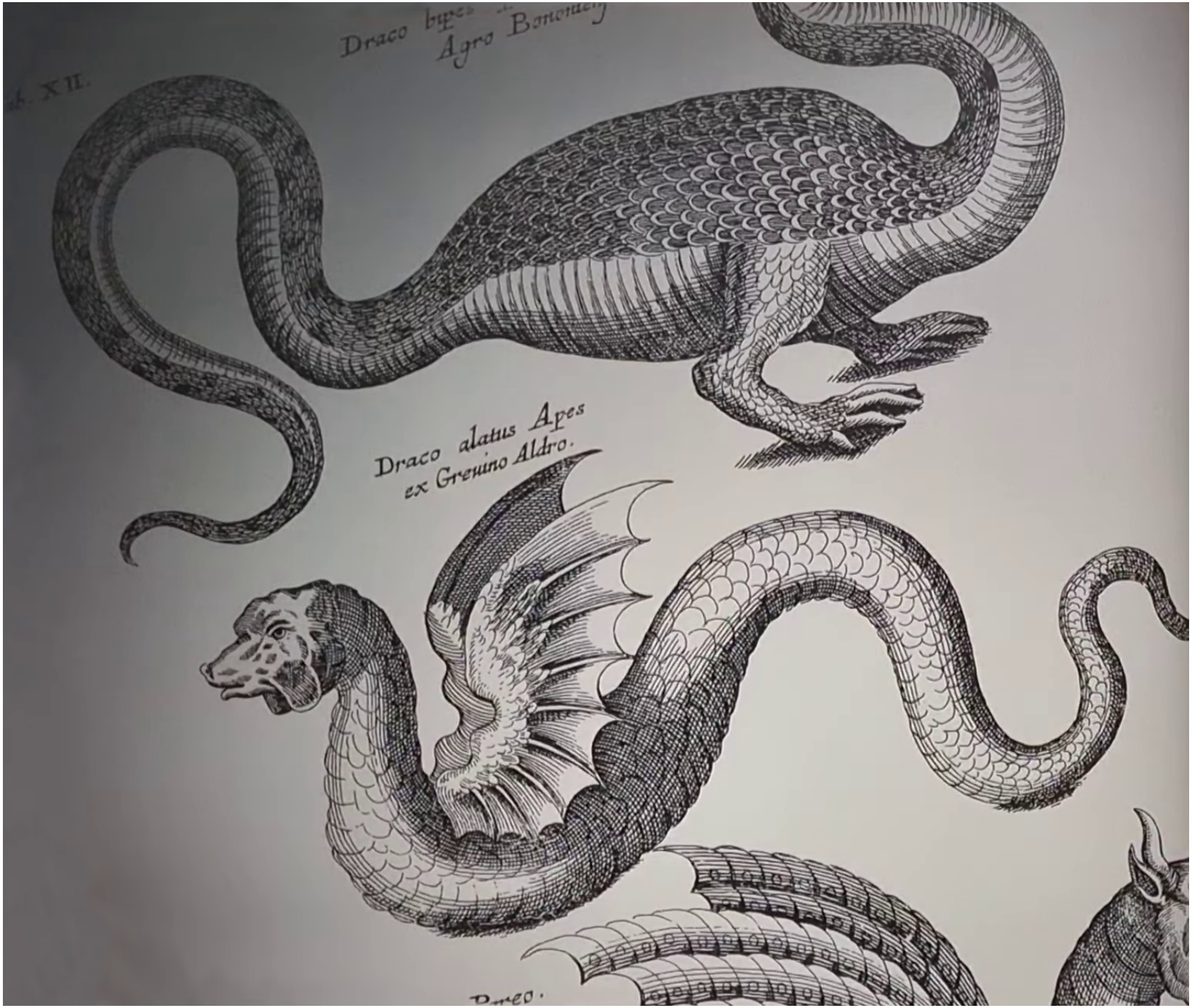


In this concept art of the Valley we see 16 white trico statues evenly dotting its rim—the same number of parts that comprise the stone sarcophagus in the mirror room. However, the final game contains mores statues along the rim, to assure that players can see them from atop the Sentinel Tower, and (per the team confirming for us) has nothing to do with the total number of tricos in the world.

Some subtleties are lost between the English and Japanese script translations (due to the differences between the languages and how they handle some parts of speech), but there's also a third name for the area: Ukaiya (pronounced OOH-KAI-YA), which is what it's called by villagers in the surrounding areas. The word is a play on the Japanese word 'ukai,' meaning cormorant fishing, and the fact that the character for 'valley' in Japanese can also be read as 'ya'—resulting in 'cormorant fishing valley.' Cormorant fishing is a traditional fishing technique whereby fishermen lead several cormorant birds on leashes alongside a boat, who then dive underwater and swallow fish whole. The cormorants store the fish in a pouch within their throats (stopped from fully swallowing larger fish with a snare around their necks). The fish are then extracted by the fishermen back on the boat, by making them cough them up. While this may sound wholly unrelated to the game at first, it's actually a similar concept to how the tricos eat the chosen ones, only to return to the Nest before coughing them back up—hence, Ukaiya.



The Valley stands out sharply from the flat plains around it, leading some fans to speculate that it was caused by a meteor crash, or perhaps something even more alien. Suzuki will only tell us that it's "a landform you wouldn't see much of on the globe. I wonder why…"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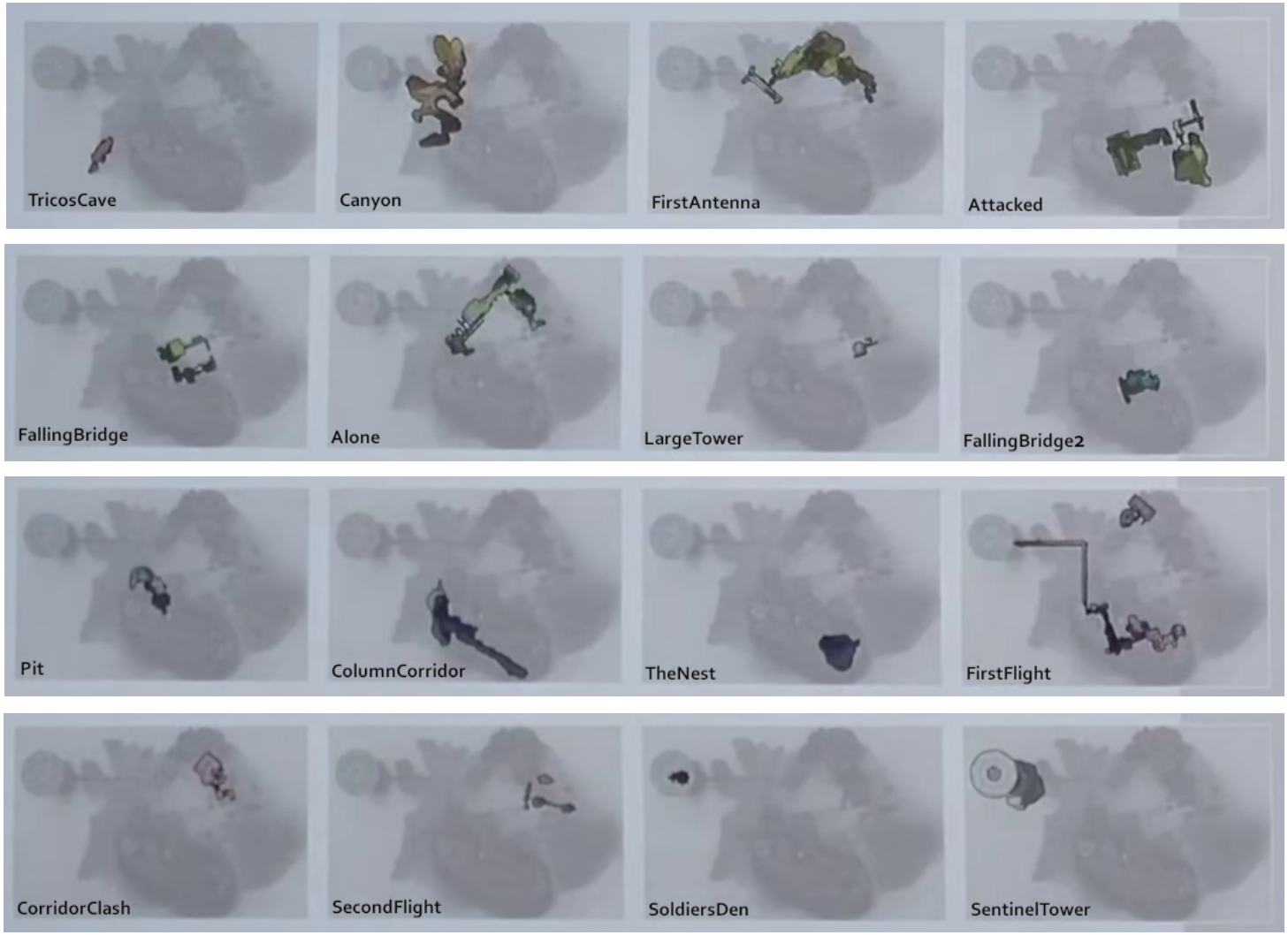
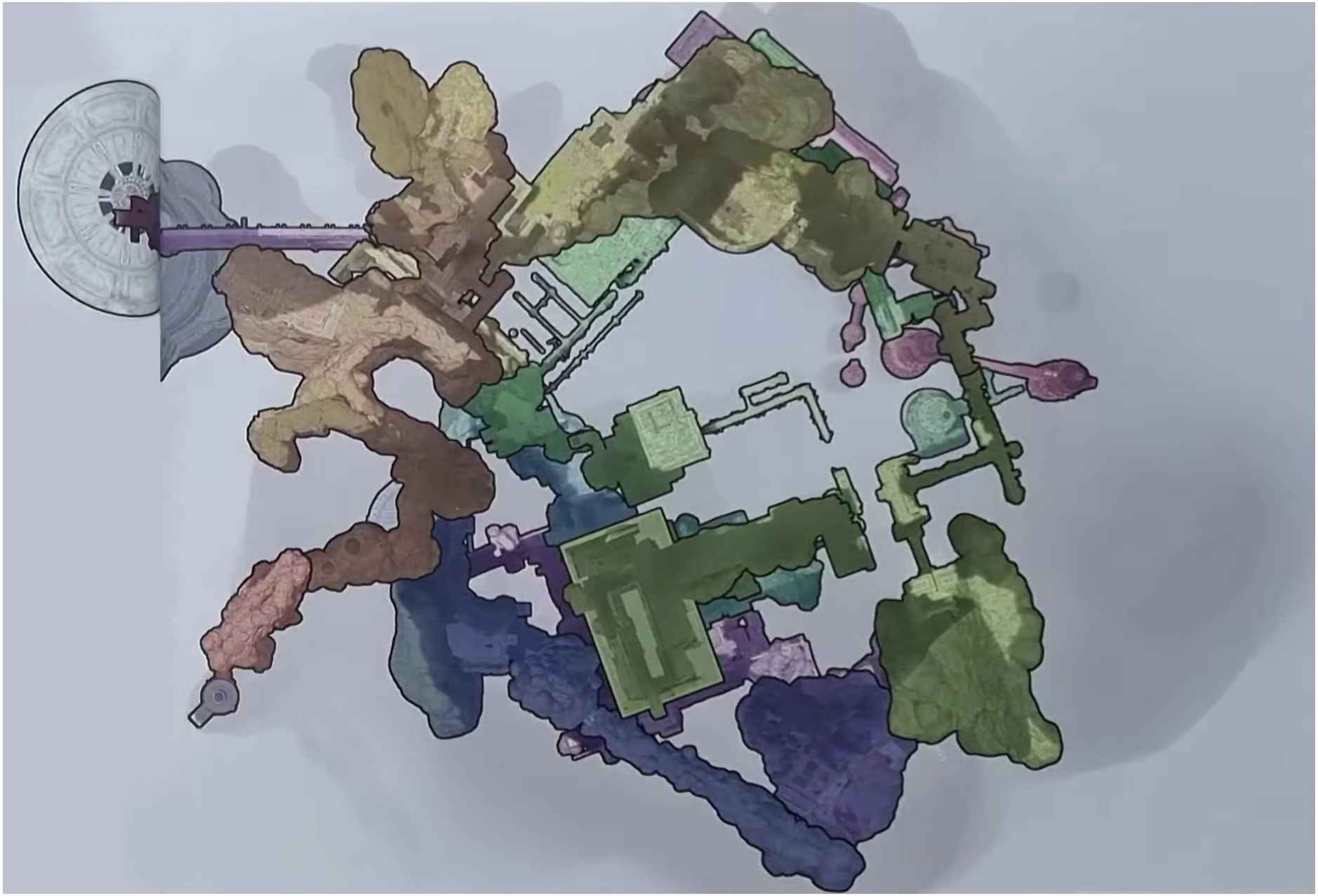
STORY PLAYTHROUGH CHAPTER | 03

The Valley | Overview

Here, in what is by far the largest chapter of this book, we'll go through the entire adventure, presenting its most beautiful moments, stunning vistas and darkest corners as a chronological tour of the game's key scenes. Our conversation with the genDESIGN team forms the core of the commentary here; topics are usually related to the area being played, but occasionally stray towards general game design or narrative questions as one thing leads us to another. The illustrations and renders we present on these pages are usually accompanied by short (and sometimes not so short) notes to help add context or explain the purpose of an image or sequence. Our hope is that this format makes the book easy to flip open and enjoy—even if you only want to look at the sumptuous imagery.

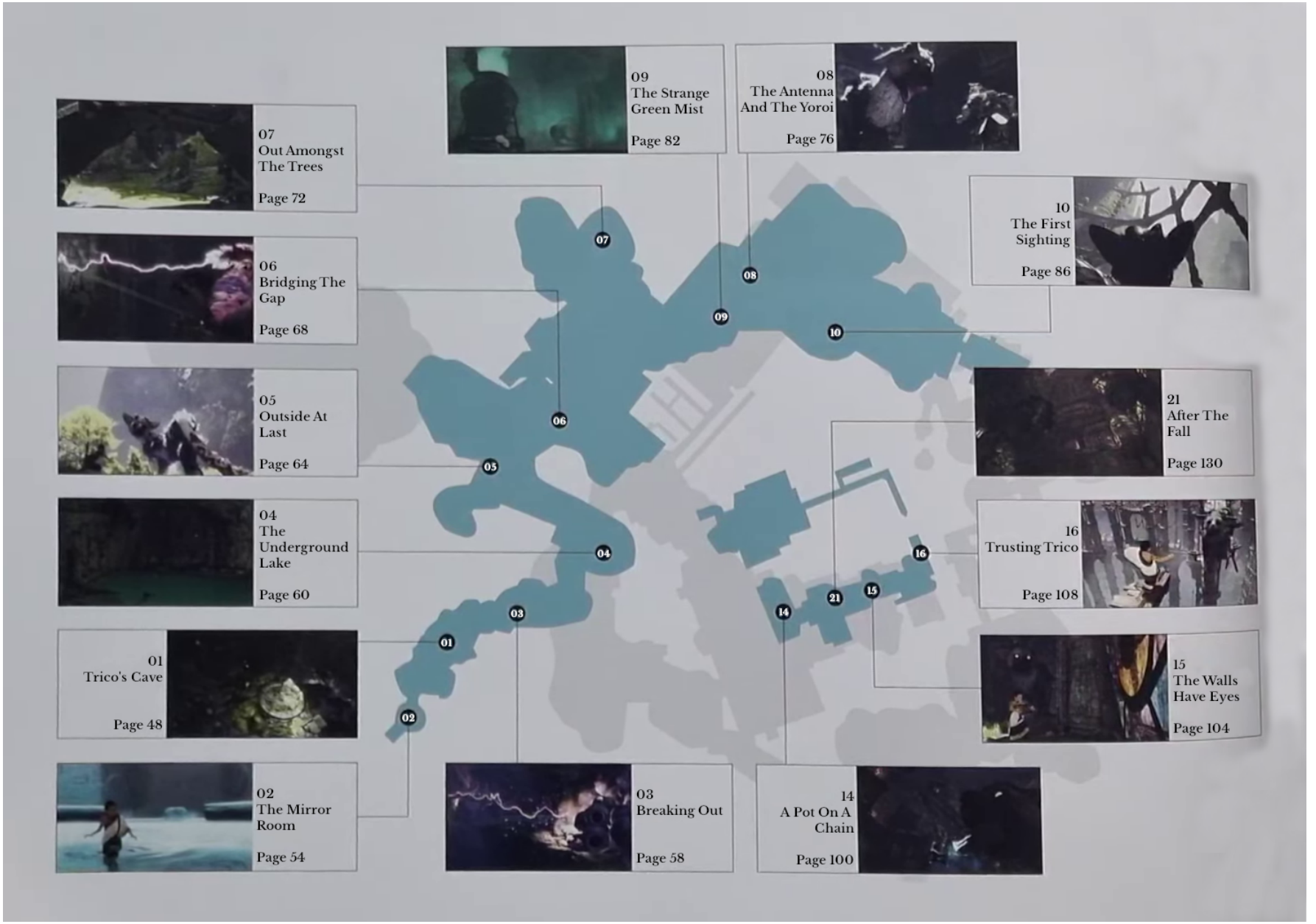


The maps here were created by genDESIGN after the game was finished. We've labeled each separate part with the development name for that area to provide a little more insight into how the team thought about each area's place and theme within the game.



The Valley | Side View

The side view maps here help to give a real impression of not just how the areas all fit together, but how *well* they fit together. There is more cohesion in the overall design than could be expected of such a large game developed over such a lengthy period—from these images you can see the way the geographical, vertical progression is linked to the game's narrative pace.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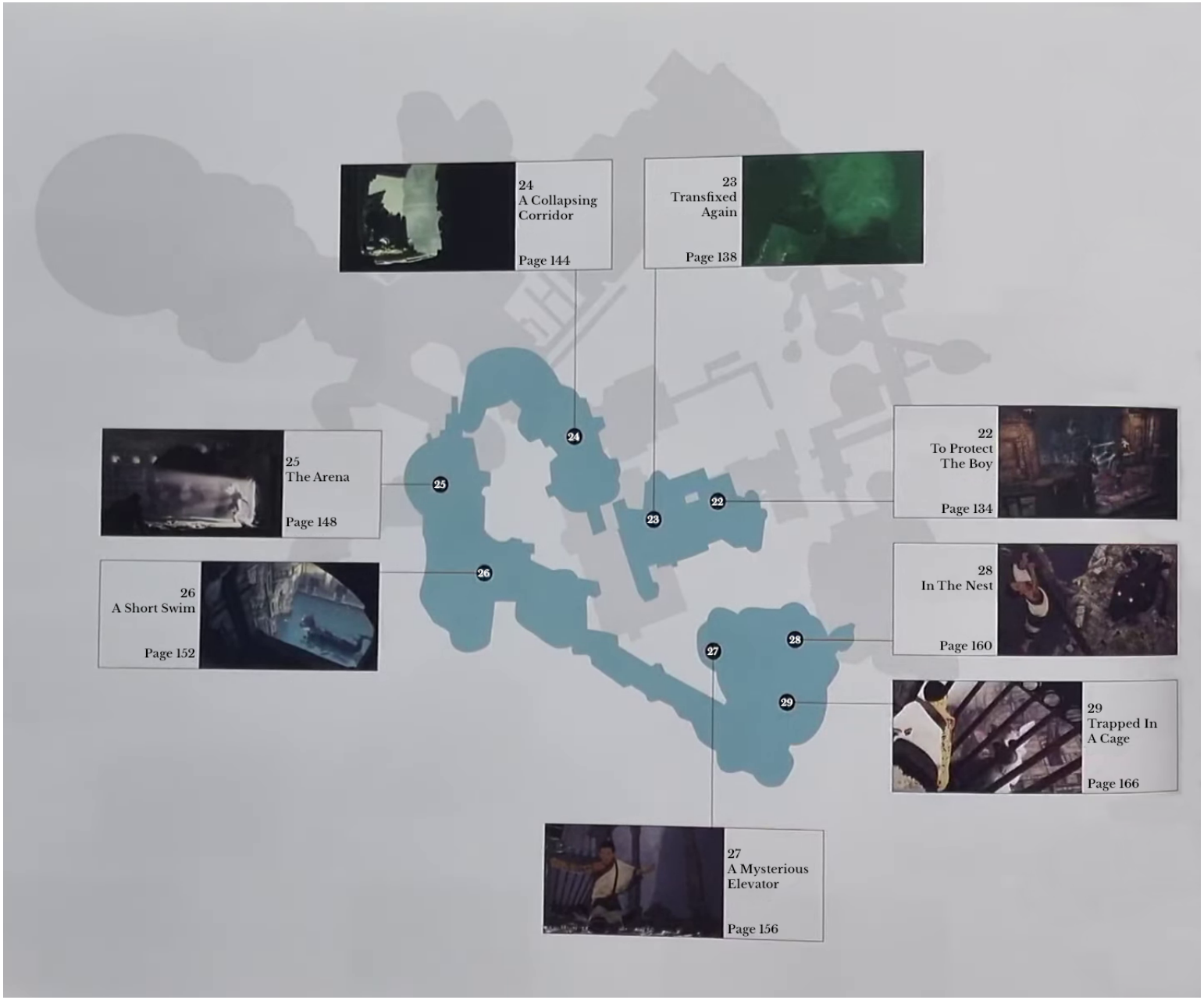
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01 | Trico’s Cave

The Boy awakes with a start. It’s dark, but the outline of a huge creature’s head makes him slowly back away. As the wounded creature cries out, its chain clanks and the situation takes on a different kind of urgency…

When Ueda thought about how the game should begin, he looked to his past work and considered a different, more immediate approach. “Thinking back on *Shadow of the Colossus*, the opening was fairly long. From the time you hit the START button a long time passes until you can actually control the character, so with *The Last Guardian* we wanted you to be able to start the game fairly quickly,” Ueda tells us. “Even though it has the title ‘*Wander and the Colossi*’ [its Japanese name], it’s a long time before you find a Colossus. So with ‘*Trico*’ we wanted you to hit the START button and there’s Trico.”

There’s a lot to take in once you gain control of the Boy. This environment is filled with clues to the kind of journey the game will take you on; teaching the player the options they have at their disposal is important if they’re expected to solve puzzles. Ueda and his team had a strong desire to make *The Last Guardian* more accessible than their previous work. Tanaka says that “Just as with many recent games, we start with a tutorial, to reduce the sense of suddenly being thrown into the game. But we also wanted that tutorial to help develop the story.” Their solution is in the narration, a device that frames the adventure while offering not-so-subtle hints to the player.

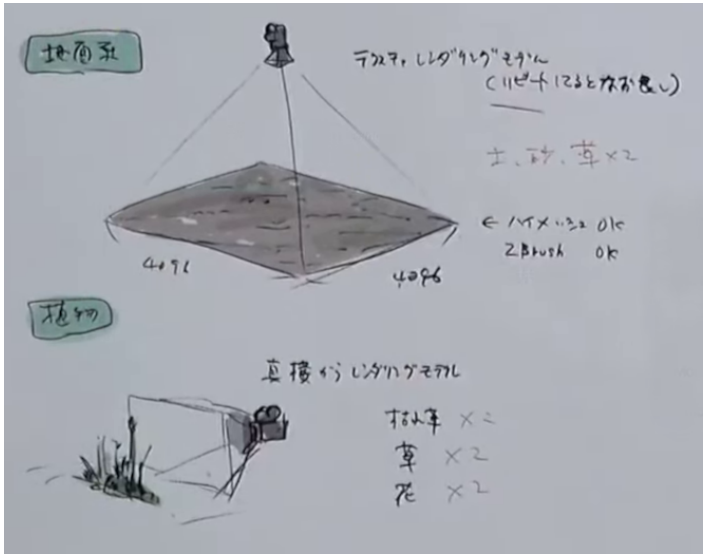
Trico is also used to indicate progress, its responses being read by the player as they feed and soothe the creature in order to get it back on its feet. Its diminished state and need of care provide the foundation of the pair’s relationship.

The opening area was always anchored by the circular structure in the ground that houses Trico’s chain. This same structure was the first image ever released from the game—becoming an iconic visual with fans—first shown in a development team job listing in early 2008.

Ueda’s suggestive drawings often express the tone of a scene as a starting point. It’s an enviable ability in a director and helps to explain the team’s almost total deference to him on the game’s themes and plot details.

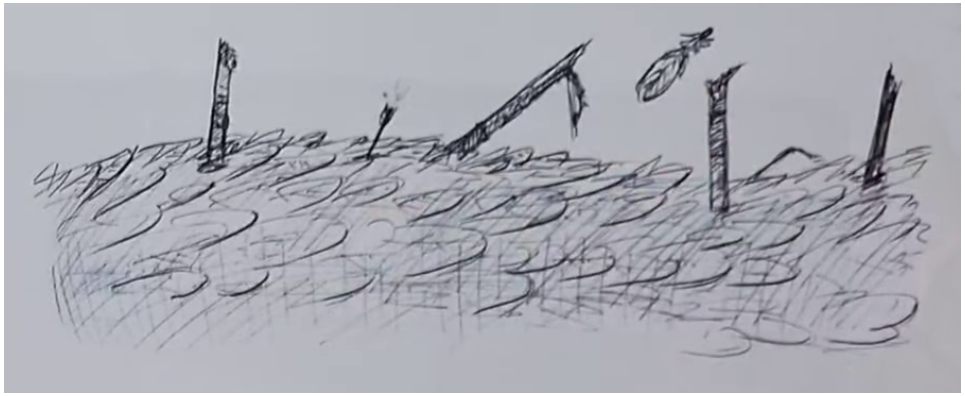
To the question of why Trico gets chained up in this area by the Yoroi, the team react coyly. The suggestion that Trico's horns need to grow back to re-enable the Core's control over the beast is met with approval—it certainly makes sense, they agree. Their process generally puts the necessity of the game being fun ahead of any story or world-building considerations—these typically follow soon after to cohere the level design with the environments.

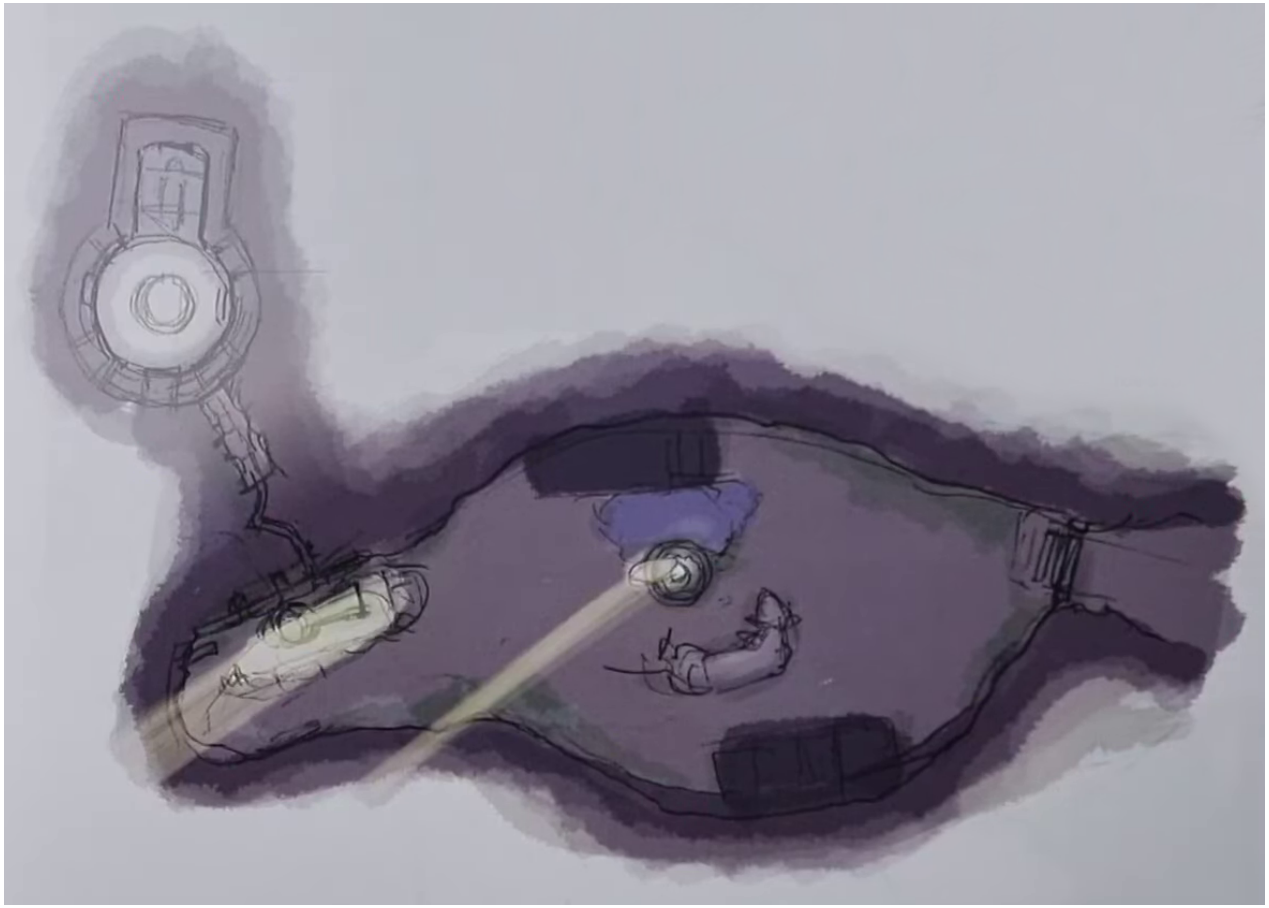
We asked the team if they thought their approach to game design differed from those of other studios. Tanaka answered by way of an example: "We start with an empty field, where we can combine parts freely. As we introduced various elements, like the ground and a barrel, we thought about the different ways to play with them. For example, for players to carry a barrel, maybe they need to walk slowly across a balance beam with it, or as you see in the game, the player needs to jump quickly [across a gap] to collect a barrel rolling down a slope. So we began by thinking about ways of playing and then built the levels around them. And when we built the levels, we didn't make this design too obvious. For example, we imagined that a room was built for a different purpose, but after parts of it crumbled, then the player could unexpectedly use the rafters as a route through it. That's the kind of game design we did."



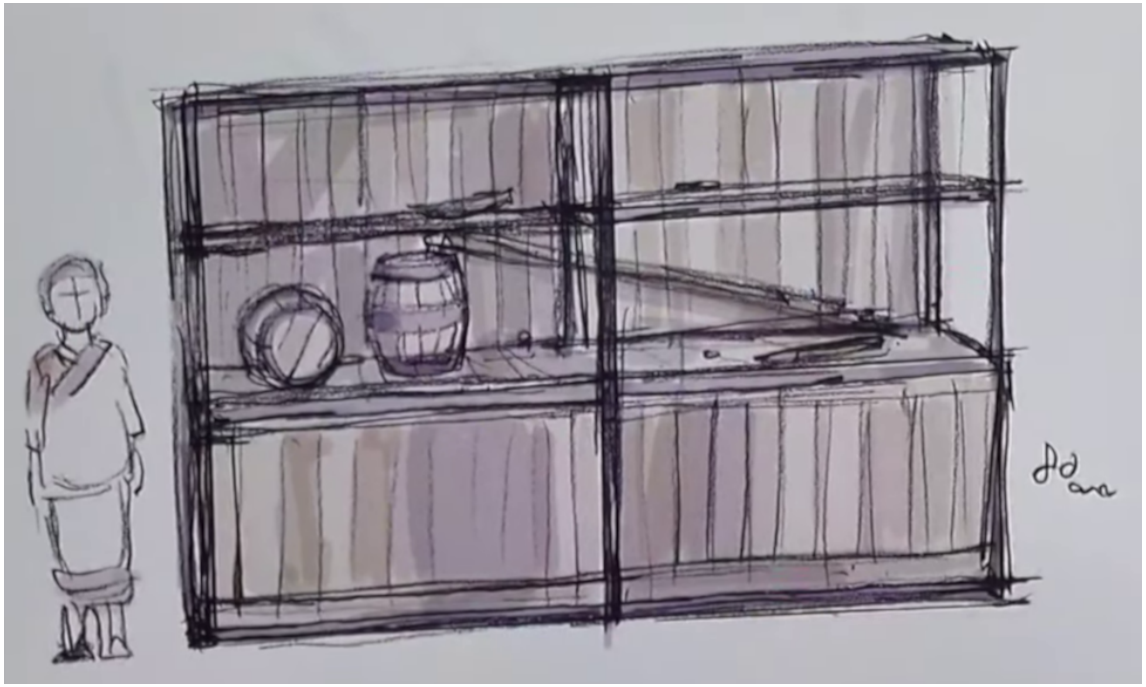
This diagram explains how to create a texture map for use in the game. This process is standard in game development, but the team visualize it with flair.

Note: After translating all Japanese text on the images shown throughout this book, we decided to omit the more obvious and unrevealing annotations, but we've included English translations for the most interesting ones.

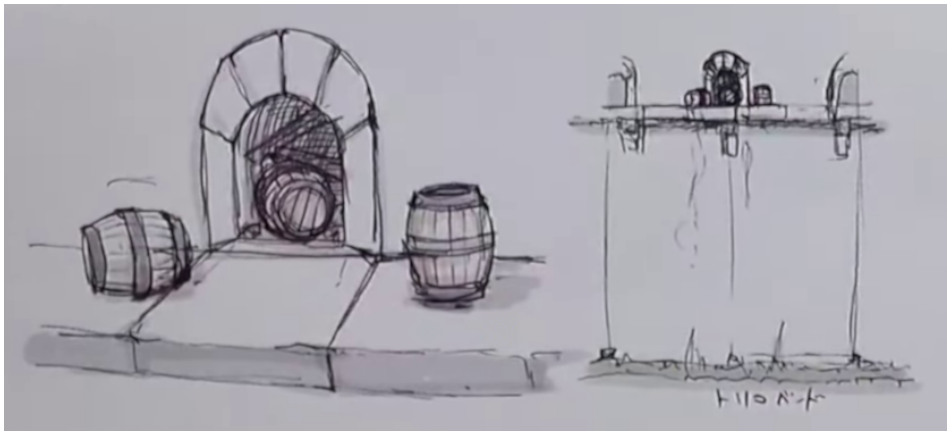


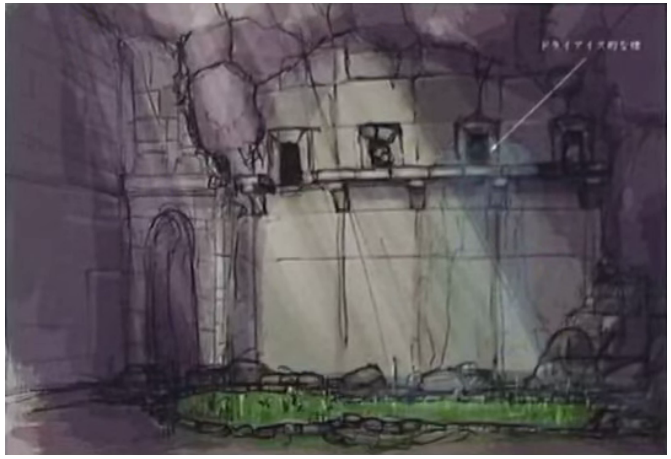


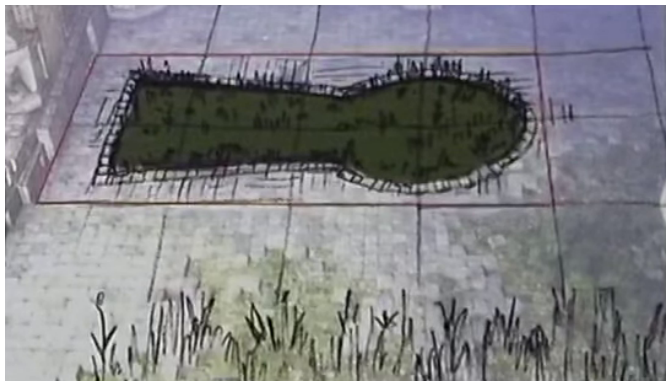
This map shows the basic layout of the cave area. The original design notes on the map pointed out two ‘structures’ at the north and south of Trico in the main chamber, and the key-hole-shaped grass, labeled as a ‘Trico bed.’



Right from the start of the game, these shelves grant us an implied history of the game world, from which we can start asking questions like who built them, and for what purpose?

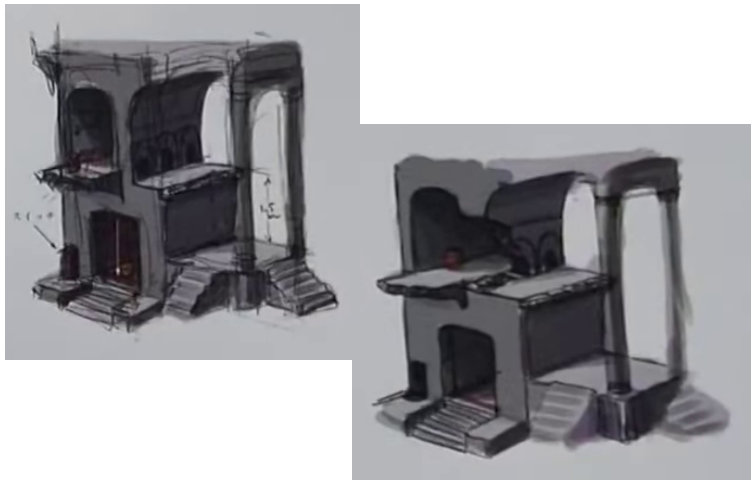






This first area was designed about halfway through development, Tanaka says, but was changed at various points until near the end. Overall, he says, out of all areas in the game, this one had the most time spent on it. Like most areas, Trico's cave (as can be seen in the concept art) didn't change drastically on its way to the form it takes in the final game, and most changes were made largely in the service of the level design—in fact, the team spends much less time creating detailed concept art than most studio development teams, and we asked Ueda why that was. "This is just me speaking right now, but I don't really see the point of it," he explains. "Even if you have such great art, when you translate it into the game, not much of it is useful. It ends up having to fit into the constraints of the game. Focusing on the art is difficult, but focusing on the levels and building from there makes for a better game."

The area that leads towards the mirror room requires the player to ascend to a ledge and enter a small tunnel in the wall. Looking down from this ledge reveals that the patch of grass below is shaped like a keyhole. Patches like this one appear several times throughout the game, so we asked the team what sort of meaning they might have. Tanaka replied that the motif (though not the actual meaning in the game) behind these "is not actually a keyhole, it's more like a grave. A 'Japanese pyramid' of sorts. This is supposed to be a bed, for tricos to sleep on." Burial mounds in this shape, called 'kofun,' appear throughout Japan, often massive in scale. These trico beds are just one of several connections to ancient Japanese culture that can be found in the game.



The cave was first created without these small adjoining storage rooms. The sketches describe how the rooms should look, and then 'draw-overs' were used to show exactly where they should be added to the sides of the cave.

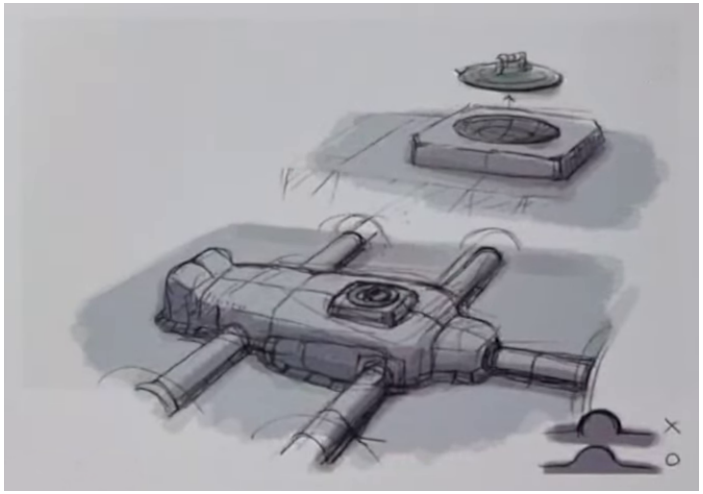
The Mirror Room | 02

A deep crack in the wall is revealed to be a cavity in a clearly unnatural chamber. The air inside is frozen and the boy hops from foot to foot as he explores the otherworldly space.

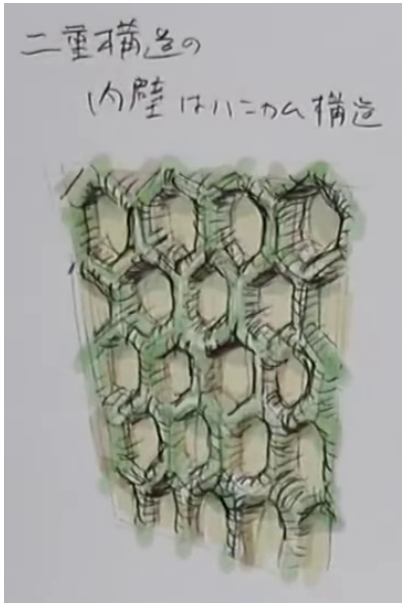
There is no place in *The Last Guardian's* world as mysterious as the mirror room, and despite its simplicity it is packed with potential implications and connections to Ueda's previous games. This is where the Boy finds the mysterious Mirror that can be used to control the lightning within Trico's tail, wrenching it free from the chest of a strange stone sarcophagus.

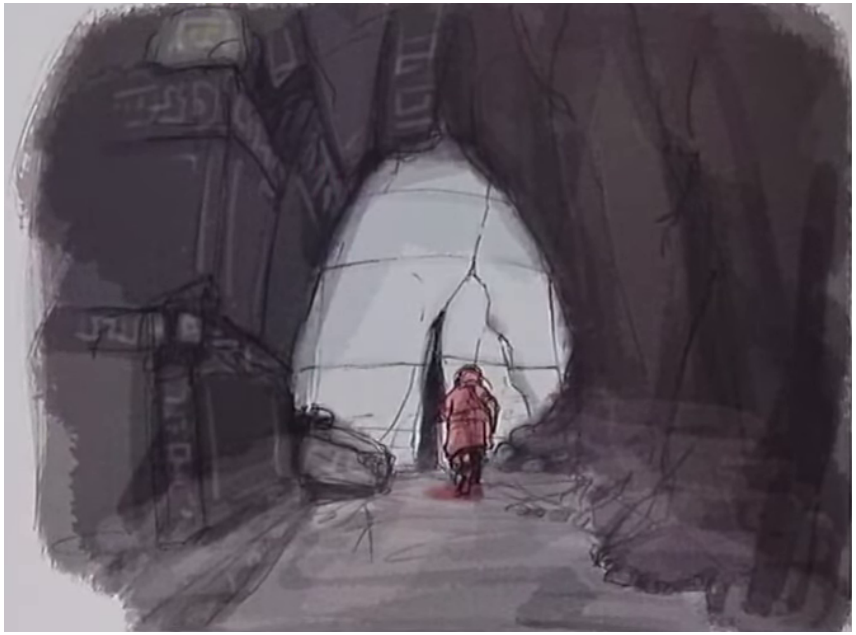
Ueda won't reveal too much about this special area, focusing his comments primarily on the pool in the room's center—noting that it is itself a kind of large mirror, something he wants people to take away from it. "I'm not saying that it connects *The Last Guardian* and *Shadow* directly, but the spring is a thing like the Mirror, and the underside of the Mirror could be connected to the world on the other side of the pool. Another world could exist on the other side, though…maybe it's a world of things that haven't happened, or maybe it is the world of *Shadow*… You can think about what it means."

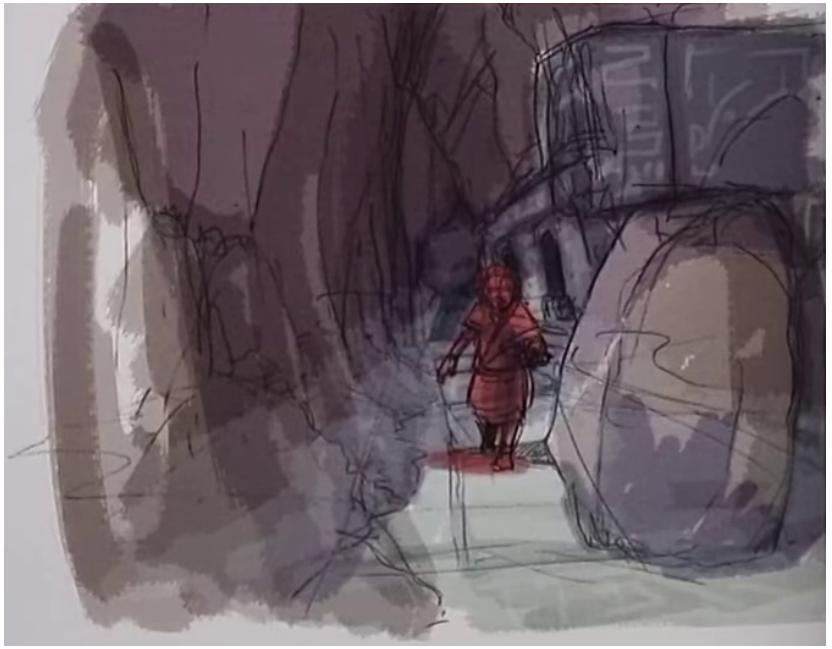
There has been some debate by fans as to where exactly in the geography of the game this room exists, given that it appears to be made of the same strange material as that of the Sentinel Tower. When we asked if it was directly beneath the Tower, Tanaka told us definitively (even drawing us a sketch to demonstrate) "it's a bit far, they're not connected physically and are in quite different places."



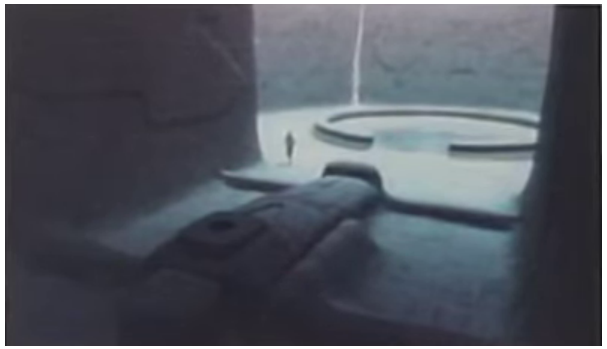
Some sketches refer to the Mirror as a 'key,' indicating its importance much later in the game when it is used to access the Sentinel Tower by placing it in the plinth there.



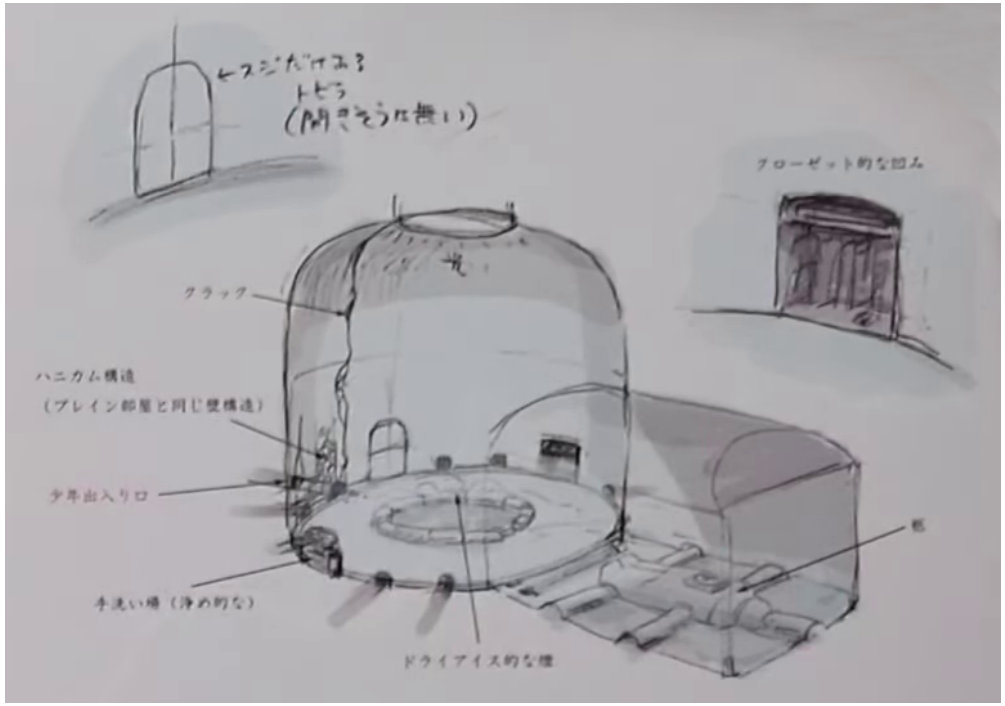




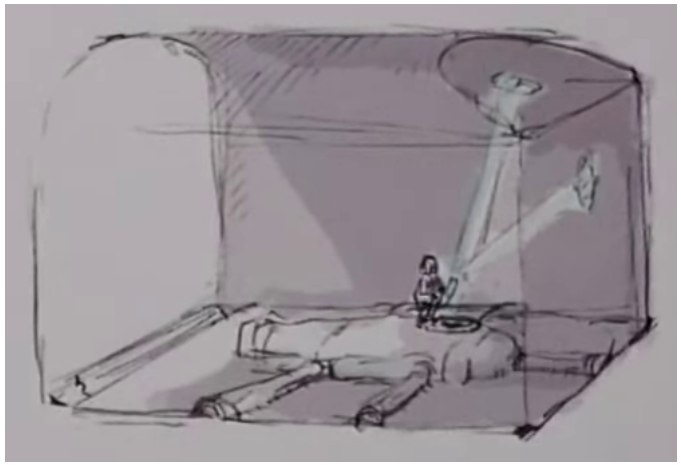
The crack that leads into the Mirror room was given special attention from the design team, down to the interior makeup of the wall's construction: while very difficult to see in the final game, it is made of a honeycombed structure, a design meant to exemplify strength and show the reinforced sturdiness of the wall. (This also plays into some very interesting fan theories about the Valley being akin to a beehive in some aspects.)



A unique animation can be seen in the Boy only in this room (and nowhere else in the game), as he shivers, holding himself while rubbing his arm for warmth. We're told by the team that this room is meant to suggest suspended animation (in Japanese, 'kōrudo suripu,' literally the English words 'cold sleep').



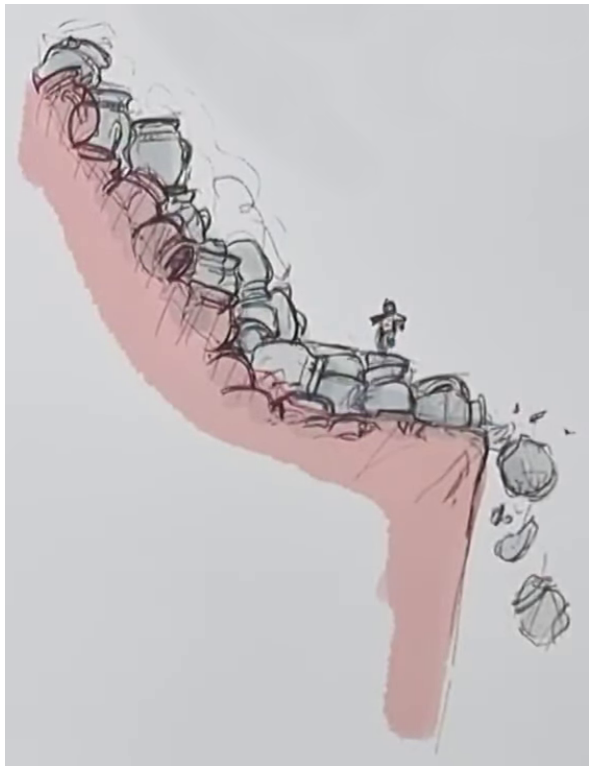
Earlier sketches of this room contain some additional curiosities, including a deeper, more distinct alcove on the far side of the room, and a "Place for hand washing (for purification)" directly across from it. It also makes note of the inoperable doorway across from the sarcophagus (that is very subtly shown in the final game), which Tanaka notes is connected to the Sentinel Tower, "so the Tower could access that room with the Mirror."



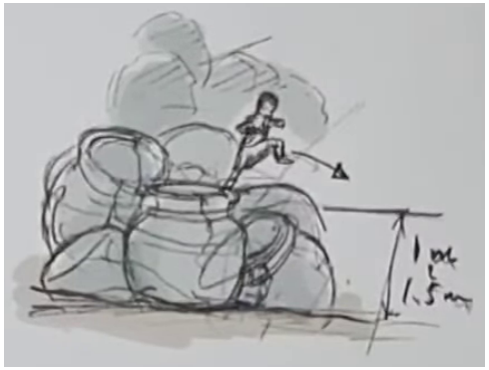
Breaking Out | 03

Holding up the newly-discovered Mirror projects a beam of pale green light. The usefulness of this mysterious object takes the Boy by surprise as he attempts to find a way out of the cave.

The Mirror is a fascinating item, from its origins embedded in the sarcophagus to its ability to summon forth lightning from Trico's tail. After being used to escape from the starting cave by demolishing a patchwork wooden wall, it can be used to destroy a pile of pots blocking Trico's way on a narrow ledge, and it's required soon after to blast down another wooden wall in the underground lake cavern. It's used in this way intermittently throughout the game, as well as to destroy the glass eyes that stop Trico in its tracks, and of course as an offensive weapon against the Yoroi.



This area serves as a practice ground for aiming the Mirror's light. Many players will still be adjusting to controlling the Boy at this point, or eager to simply progress, but those who stop have the option of experimenting with the Mirror.



These sketches indicate that the pots may have been intended to act as a precarious obstacle that required some care to get past. According to Tanaka, the pots were used to show that Trico has an awareness of his surroundings and can maneuver over obstacles, even some destructible ones like these pots.

The Underground Lake | 04

The canyon gives way to a water-filled cavern. For the Boy, the obvious path forward is to jump right in, but Trico will take a little more convincing…

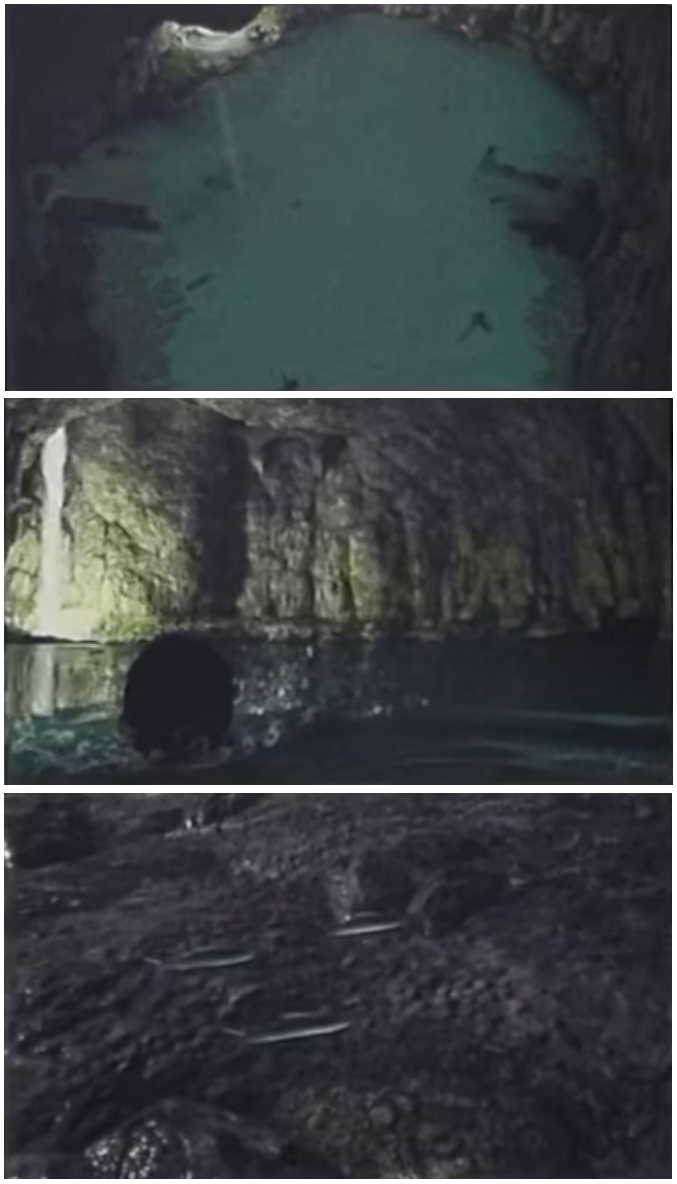
Originally, the Mirror wasn't a mirror at all, but a "weird bird-shaped gun," Tanaka tells us. He also makes it clear that there is only one such Mirror in the game's world, and that Trico's lightning power cannot be used without it. In another nod to ancient Japanese culture, the Mirror is intended to be similar to the ancient bronze mirrors of Japanese shaman-queen Himiko, called 'shinjūkyo' ('mirror decorated with gods and animals'). While once functional, these mirrors are now ornamental in nature.

Asked how important it is that his games reflect some element of Japanese art and cultural influence, Ueda replies that not being confined to a specific culture or art style is their top priority—it's very important for them to create a mix of various elements. "The Japanese elements are just one among them," he says. The Mirror's design is a good example of this philosophy; combining a cultural artifact with the symbols the team uses to add information density and a functionality that's straight from a superhero comic.

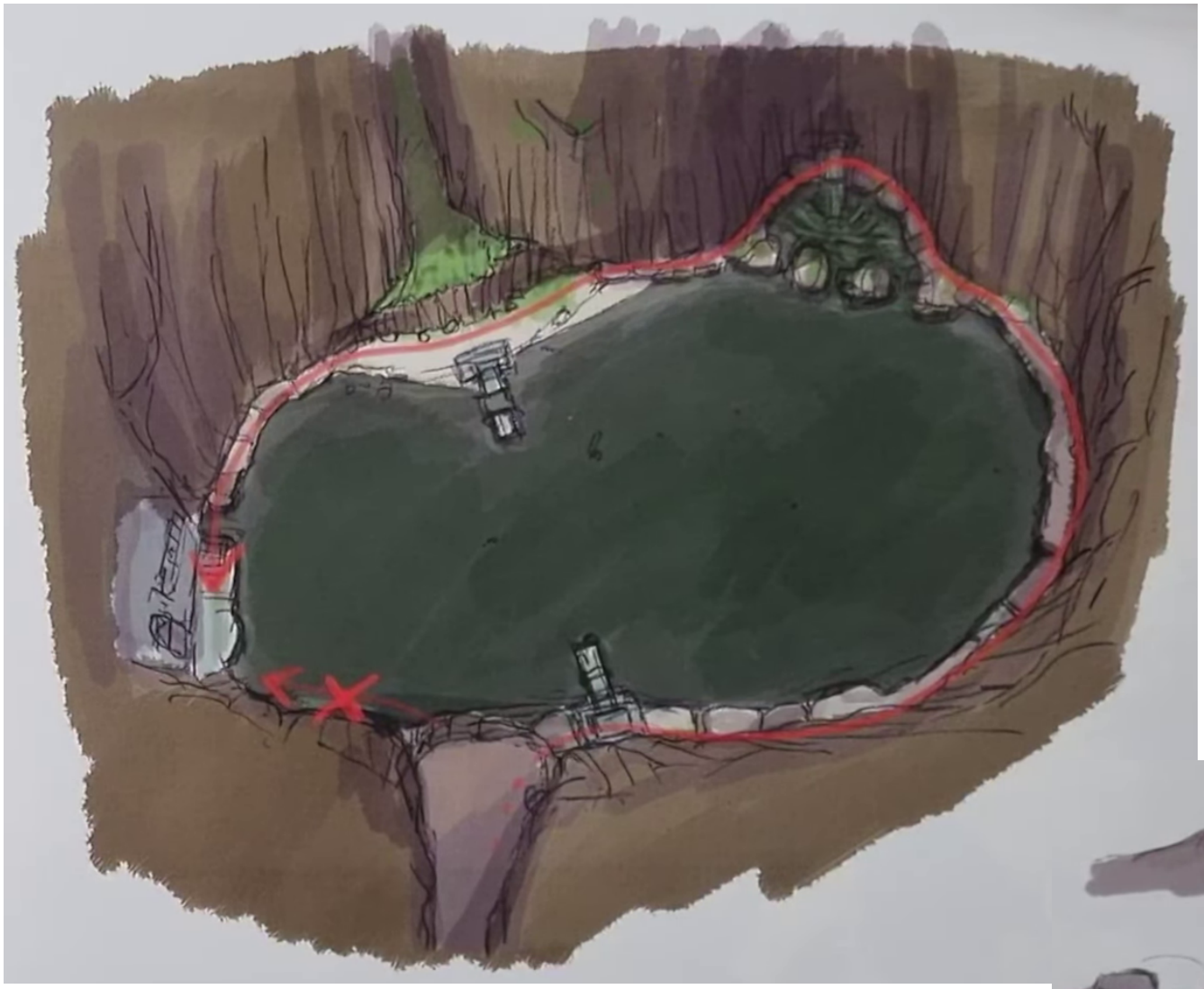
If you manage to catch a particularly close look at the Mirror, you may notice that its handle is shaped like two trico heads joined by something they're either eating or regurgitating. You might also see some surprisingly familiar symbols on its inward side…

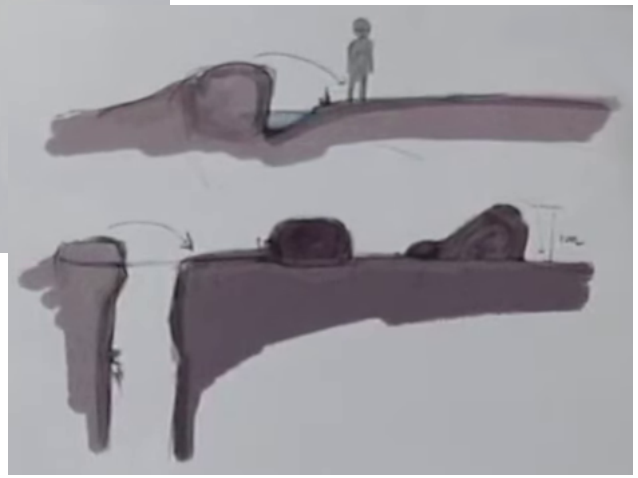
The underground lake area is memorable for a few reasons, beyond the beautiful, subterranean setting. It teaches the player several important things, such as Trico's reticence towards water, as well as how it can be coaxed into most things simply by calling out, despite its hesitance. The area tests the recently-learned knowledge of blasting down walls with the Mirror and feeding Trico barrels to advance, as well as teaching new elements such as climbing a hanging chain, breaking a crate to access the barrels within, and demonstrating that Trico's mass will displace water, causing a large splash and a momentary swell in the height of the water. Many players miss this, as they head back inside the small room just as Trico jumps down for the first barrel. Those who notice it, however, will find a certain water-related puzzle much later in the game a lot easier to figure out.

Some stone remnants of what might have once been a bridge can be seen on either side of the lake. Earlier incarnations of this area included a wooden bridge, collapsed in the middle, and a thin, stony path around the area's edge. The bridge was there as a hint to guide the player to the way forward, but it was cut due to the way it affected Trico's walking behavior.



Live fish can be found swimming in the lake here, one of only a few places in the game (though unlike in *Shadow of the Colossus*, they cannot be grabbed to pull you along underwater).





This top-down illustration shows how the bridge was planned to guide the player, along with a thin pathway that the Boy could follow around the entirety of its outer edge.

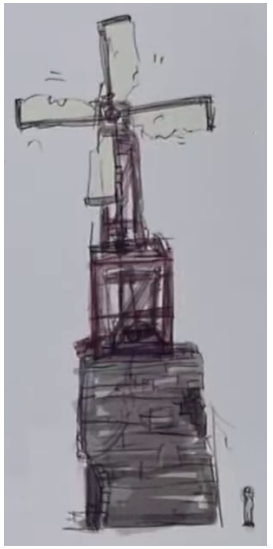
Outside At Last | 05

The pair emerge near a canyon, in the full glare of the sun. Towering structures can be seen receding into the mist above them as they try to find a way forward.

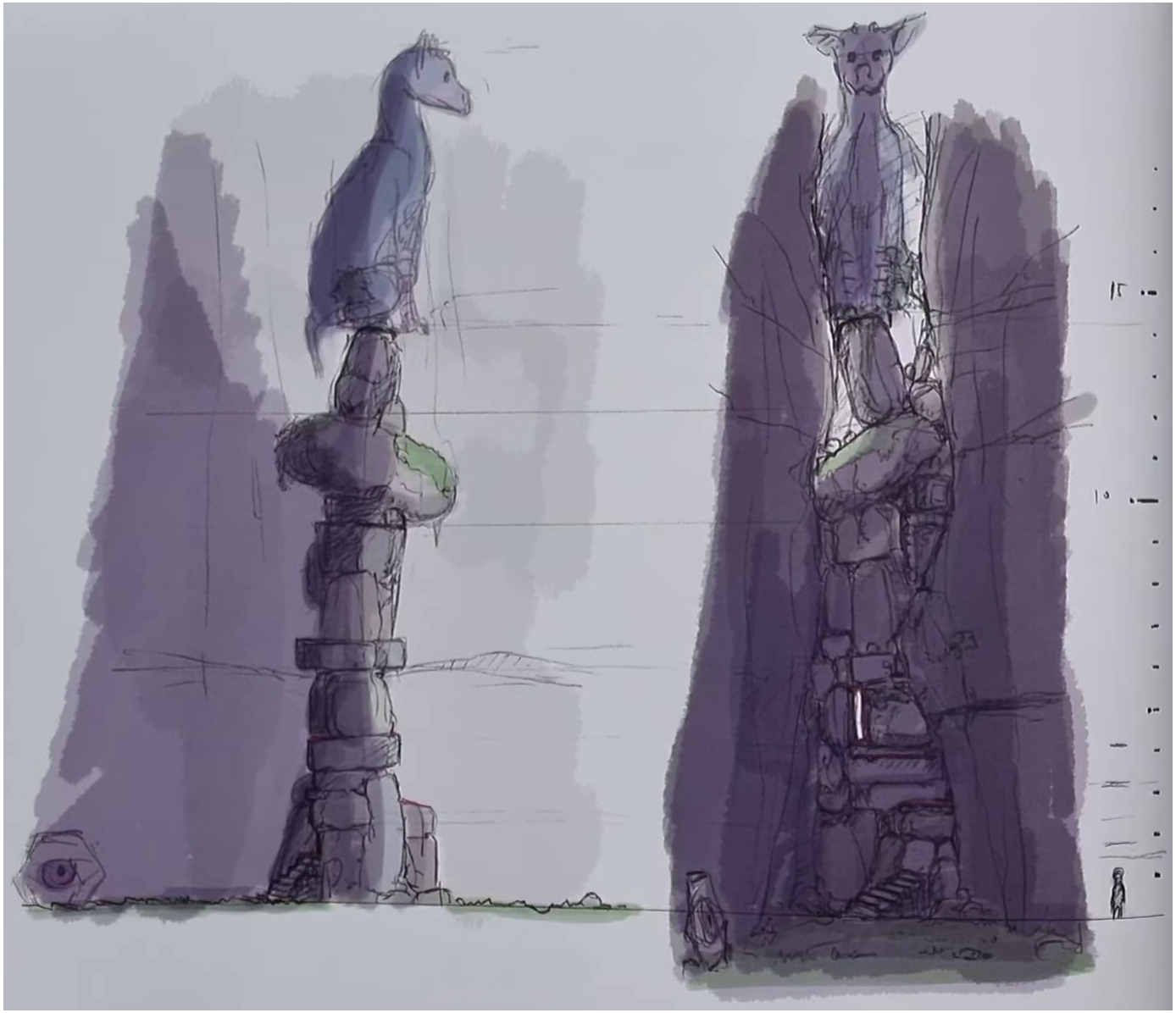
Here, players are treated to their first look at the Sentinel Tower, an important recurring landmark in the game that they will eventually visit. It wasn't always the plan to introduce it here as one of the first things that players see after stepping outside (since the game was built in pieces), but while assembling the areas together the team decided that it would be a great way to show off the Tower early on.

This first moment outside together is a welcome relief from the caves, a place for both Trico and the Boy to stretch their legs, and revel in the larger adventure that is only just becoming evident. Black lizards can be seen here for the first time, skittering amongst the grass, essentially identical to those found in *Shadow of the Colossus* (albeit only the black-tailed variety; no white tails here). Also decorating the pastoral scene are doves, similar to those found in *Shadow*, and in *ICO* before it. Another shout-out to *ICO* can be seen here too, in the form of a windmill nestled in some scaffolding high above (one of the more iconic landmarks associated with the game).

We couldn't help but notice a 'Small Animal Programmer' mentioned in the credits, so we inquired what that entailed and requested a full list of critters to make sure we hadn't missed any. You'll be able to find not only the aforementioned fish, lizards, and doves throughout the game, but also bats, butterflies, moths, and very small bugs (similar to worms) that are usually very difficult to see. The more common animals were given a slight degree of AI as well as small AI scripts, granting them more natural behavior (such as doves flocking unpredictably in the skies).



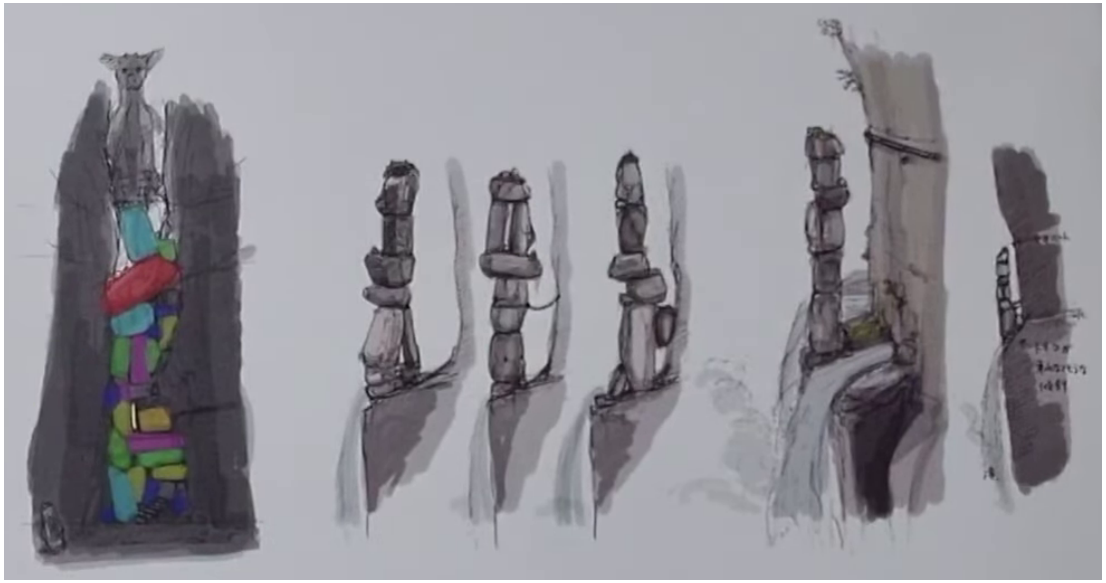
Along with the windmill, players will notice other structurally-similar elements to the team's previous games, such as expansive bridges and decorative arches. The team tell us that the inclusion of elements like these are typically a matter of game design, not an intentional visual design ethos, but at the same time, "it's also fine if the player connects these as references [between our different games]."



The illustrations here depict Trico’s scale,
contrasted with its environment, the Boy,
and even the glass eyes.

As Trico and the Boy make their way around the canyon, the first sightings of hanging decorations and even a broken glass eye can be made.

This first trip outside alludes, none too subtly, to the scale of the adventure ahead. This area of the game finds the Boy traversing a narrow ledge while Trico follows somewhere behind, hopping between shaky pillars of rocks, the first (albeit short-lived) point where the progress isn't entirely interdependent. It also begins to demonstrate how Trico may find its way around the environment, despite its path being less clear. As Tanaka tells us, with *Shadow of the Colossus* they first created the Colossi and then crafted spaces for them to exist in. But with *The Last Guardian*, they first thought about the spaces that humans would exist in and built them around that scale. And only then did they think about how Trico would navigate those narrow spaces—an approach that lends authenticity and cohesion to the world design.



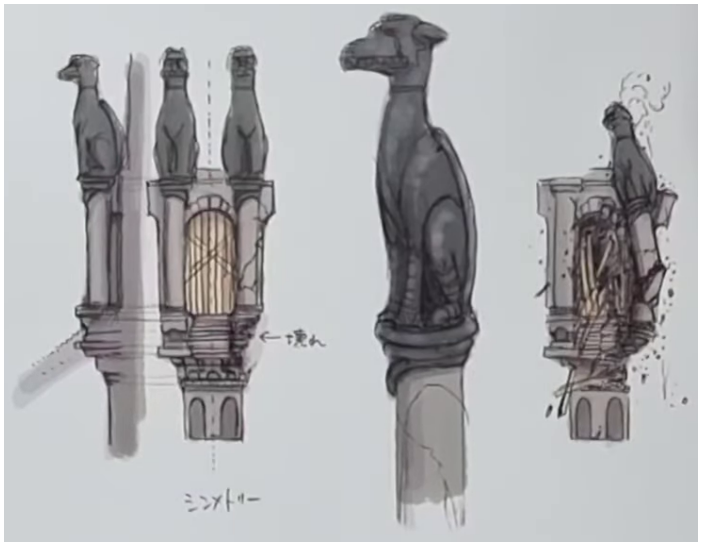
These images show the care that went into getting the rock formations and platforms that Trico can stand on just right. They had to be plausibly balanced and were color-coded according to their size for testing how they would collapse.

Bridging The Gap | 06

The only way forward leads to a dead end, but the Boy has a powerful tool with which to affect his environment. Even a gigantic stone statue can be felled by the power somehow stored within Trico's tail.

Outside, flocks of doves are used in part to emphasize scale—not just in their smallness when compared to the towering structures around them, but of the distance across the game's many broad chasms that must be navigated. Here in the canyon, scale is emphasized by the detail in the rocks and the intricate patterns in the stone structures. The team refer to this as 'information density.'

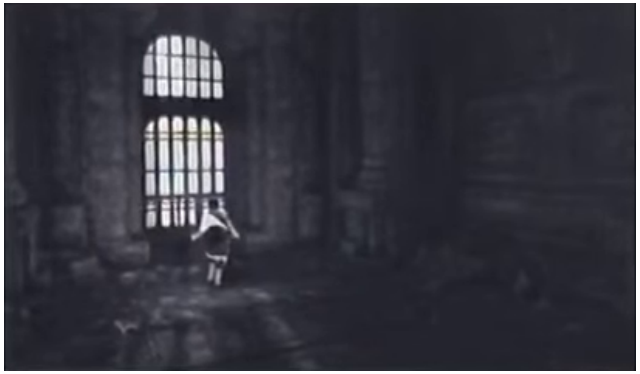
The canyon area leads the pair around a cliff wall, with Trico and the Boy having to use different sets of platforms to proceed. This may have been an ideal point to inform players about the L1 button's function to focus the camera on Trico, Tanaka muses, "but there was already too much for the player to keep track of here." The L1 button's function goes unexplained in the game, but most players find it for themselves. Like the advanced commands the Boy learns, this function is never necessary to proceed, but it can make keeping track of Trico in some areas much easier. It's a strong contrast to the various actions the Boy can perform, which are all highlighted on-screen repeatedly.

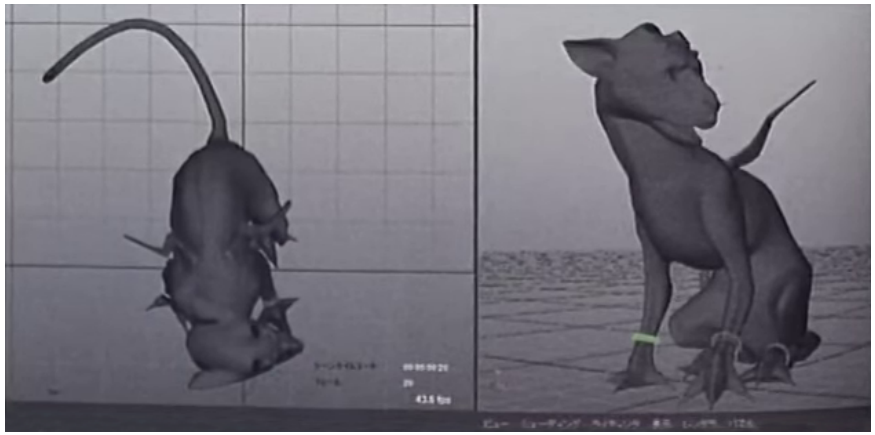


This is the first place where statues of tricos can be seen (though some players may not notice them in time before they get destroyed), but they appear in various places throughout the rest of the game.

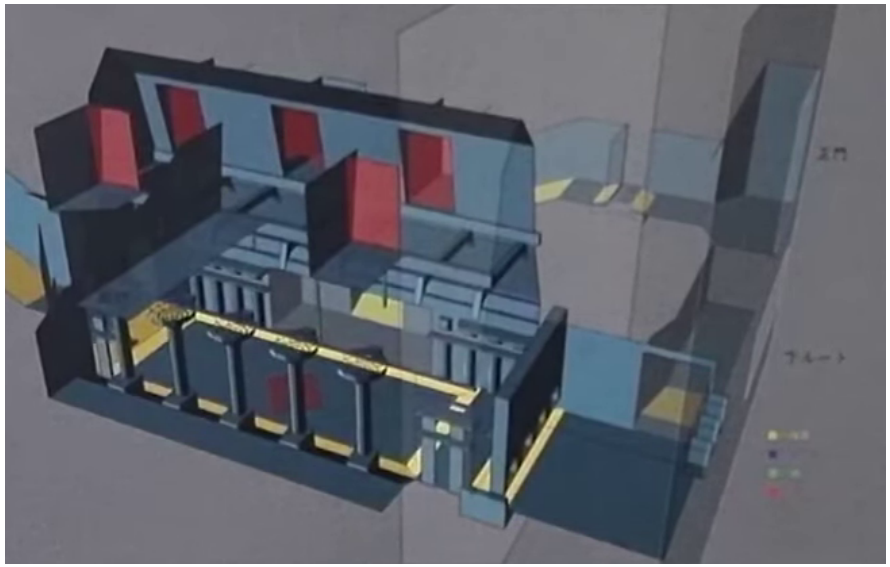
Inside again, the first opportunity for Trico to get its head stuck arises. Players who want the related ‘Collar’ Trophy must coax the beast into getting stuck in both of the holes. Using the Boy’s push action helps to encourage Trico to dislodge itself from a hole. The getting stuck animation was included just as another playful element, a frivolity to surprise players with. Trophies were not considered until late in development—so the team made use of existing gameplay elements when coming up with ways for players to unlock Trophies.

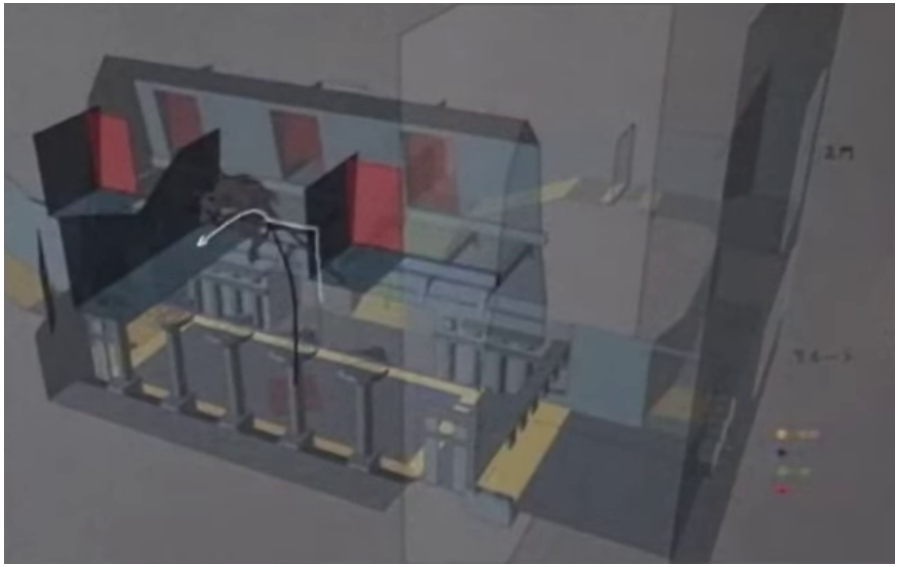
On the opposite side of this room light filters in through the bars of a blocked-off doorway. Peering through these you can just about see the first antenna room above and to the right—this area is very intricately designed and closely connected. Just past the hole that’s furthest from the entrance there’s a gap running between two large buildings. This is the same gap you’ll climb through to reach the antenna room a little later on, though at that point the connection will be far from obvious. This design echoes *ICO*’s castle, but here it’s more difficult for players to connect the different areas geographically, due to the sheer scale of the Valley.

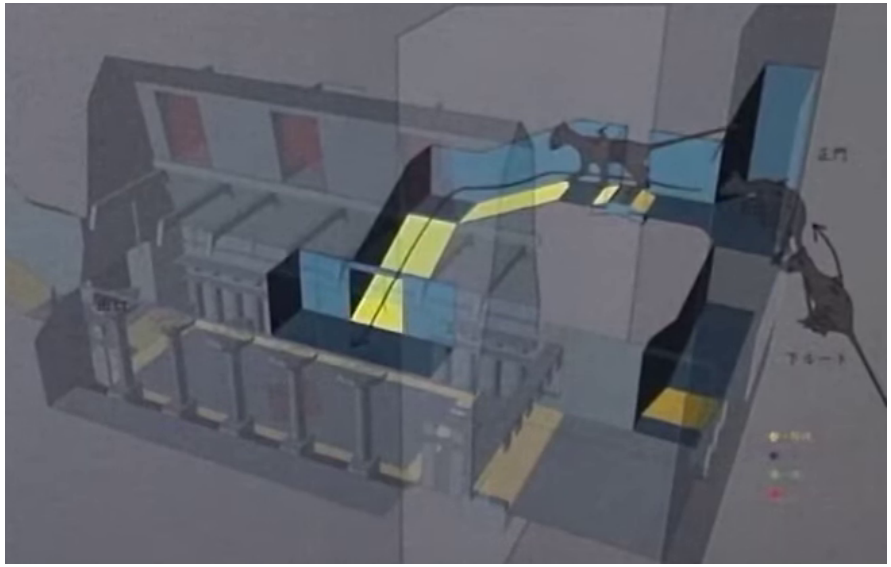




This Trico model is simpler than the one in the final game, and was used by the team to create and test animations.





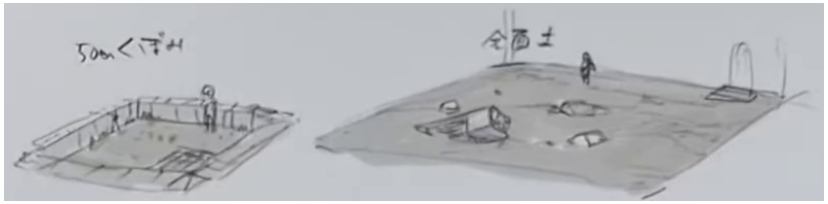


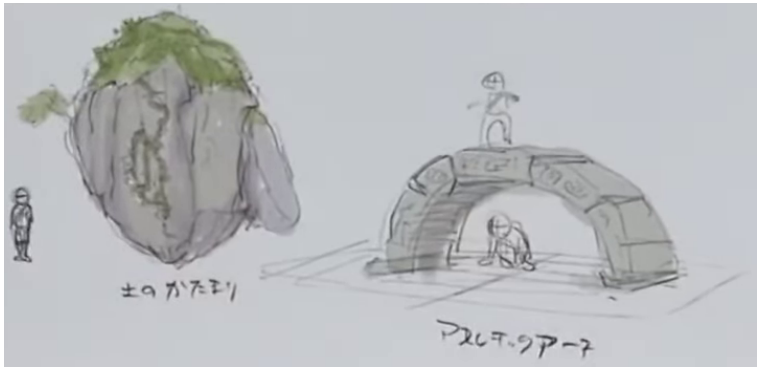
Here, we see the type of basic area model that genDESIGN would provide to JAPAN Studio, laid out with annotations. In this example, we see the first large room that our heroes must navigate after coming back indoors, with the Boy climbing a series of ledges to reach the top of the room, while Trico follows with a single jump.

Out Amongst The Trees | 07

Sunlight beckons the pair back outside, where a lush forest appears to await them. It's not as vast as it first appears, and the sheer canyon drop once again pushes them back towards the middle of the Valley.

The first forested area of the game is a welcome respite, a place for Trico to roam freely while the Boy gets lost in the natural splendor, if only for a moment. Trico is reluctant to head through the thick forest until the Boy either calls out repeatedly or begins to get too far ahead. Once it does decide to press on, however, its joy in being outside is once again obvious; 'tricos', as the species is known, seem to be creatures that thrive in open spaces, perhaps because of their potential for flight. The moment here is fleeting, though. The sketches on the following pages suggest that this was originally going to be a larger, denser section of forest for Trico to play in. As it is, it provides a brief chance to see Trico make its way through thick forest, its head level with the treetops, but only if you run ahead around the wall that dives the area then run back once Trico begins to move forward.



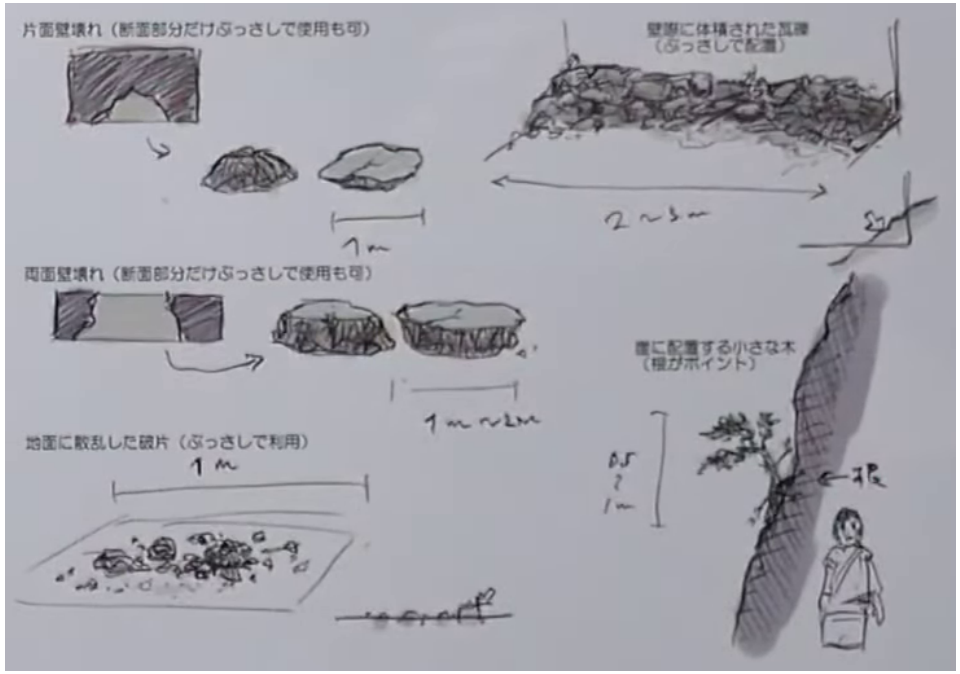


While not quite the same, these arches (which can be found throughout the game) are reminiscent of similar arches that can be found in both *Shadow of the Colossus* and *ICO*. Those arches were in fact the only identical objects found to exist across both of those games. Here, the Japanese text labels it as an 'athletic arch.'

行き止まり
カサボリ
シルエットボリ
針葉樹
完成
ボリゴン木
一枝
広葉樹
ボリゴン
ボリゴン木
ビルボードで使用
(回転して使う)
ラクラケ群

This forest was originally envisioned to be much denser, giving an opportunity for Trico's body to poke up beyond the trees—a scene reminiscent of imagery from *Nausicaä* or *The Iron Giant*. But Ueda says that "Rather than being influenced by other works, I had wondered 'what if Trico was in the forest area of *Shadow of the Colossus*?'."

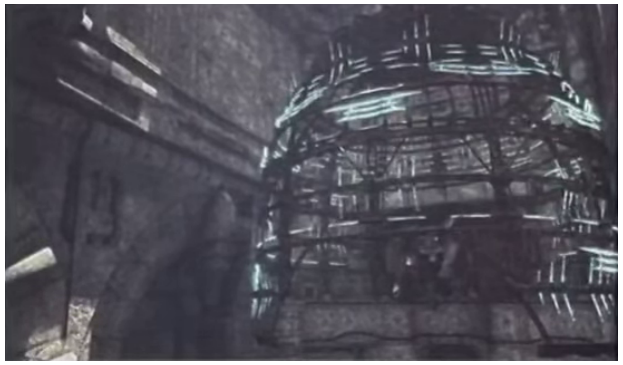
Much of the game's fine detail began to be added in the period after genDESIGN was first formed, and a lot of these sketches originate from this same period. After formally leaving Sony Interactive Entertainment's JAPAN Studio in 2011, Ueda stayed on as a contractor to finish his work on *The Last Guardian*. In the summer of 2014, Ueda founded the small development studio genDESIGN, along with several others who had worked on his previous games. For the remainder of the game's development, genDESIGN would work in close collaboration with JAPAN Studio—the former being responsible for the creative direction and vision for the game, with the latter focused on much of the execution—building out and implementing the game assets as well as AI and game engine programming.



The sketches here really show the amount of effort the team put into the game's smallest details. The exact sizes of small pieces of rubble are described, along with the importance of the roots of a tree in conveying the desired effect.

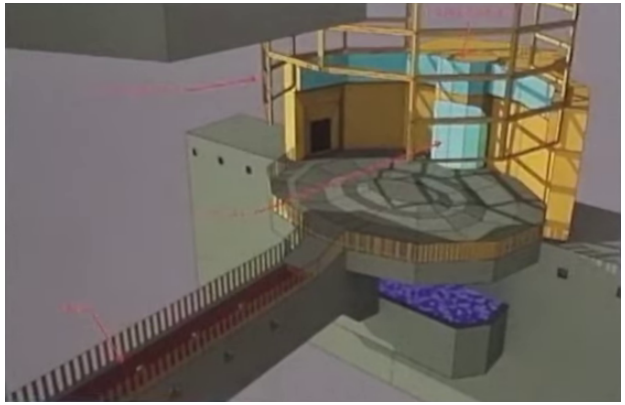
08 | The Antenna And The Yoroi

A large, circular room appears to be the only path forward. The Boy drops down, but Trico is reluctant to follow. There's an energy in the room that unsettles the beast.



The antenna rooms encountered through the game serve several important purposes. After Trico is entranced by the antenna and has swallowed the Boy, we see visions and cutscenes that provide more context for how both companions came to be here. These rooms also provide an opportunity to test Trico's willpower—is the love it has developed for the Boy great enough to resist the mind control? Their exact function in the game's world is left unclear, but it appears that the antennas are used to amplify the signal that the Core uses to exert control over the trico creatures. This control is channeled through their horns—not through the armored masks they wear, as could be interpreted (which does help to explain why Trico is chained up at the start, kept immobile until its horns—the source of its control—have grown back).

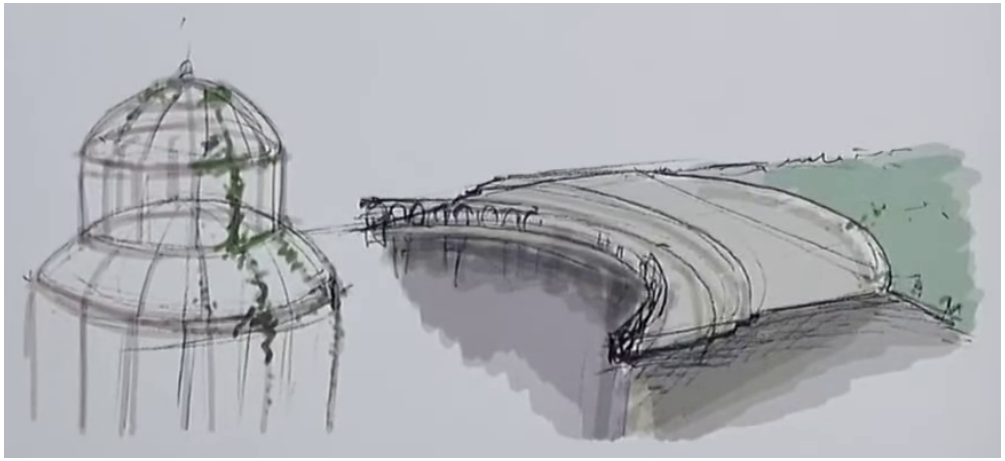
This first antenna room also introduces players—through a beautiful eureka moment, when other options have been exhausted—to the concept of climbing down Trico's tail to reach otherwise inaccessible depths.

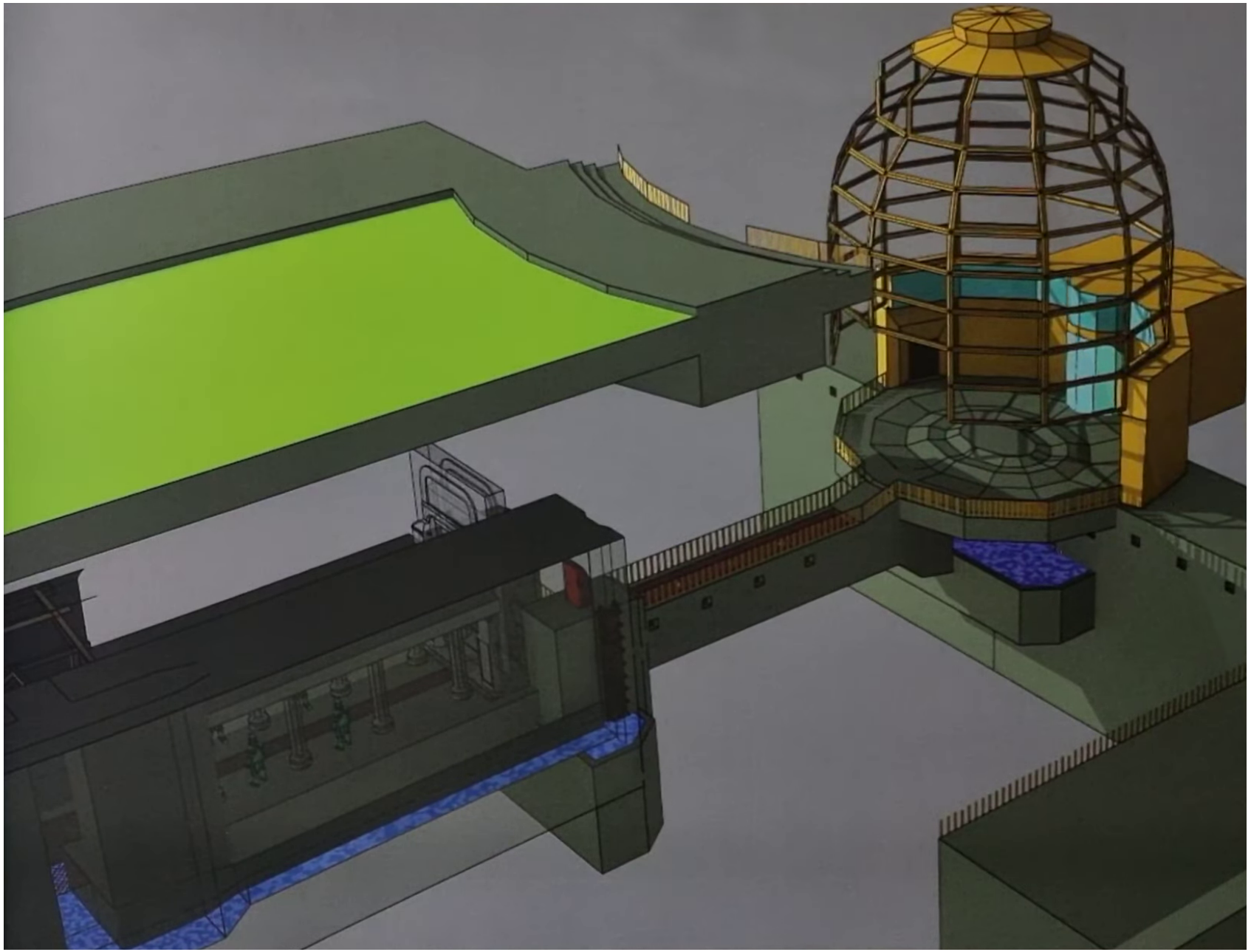


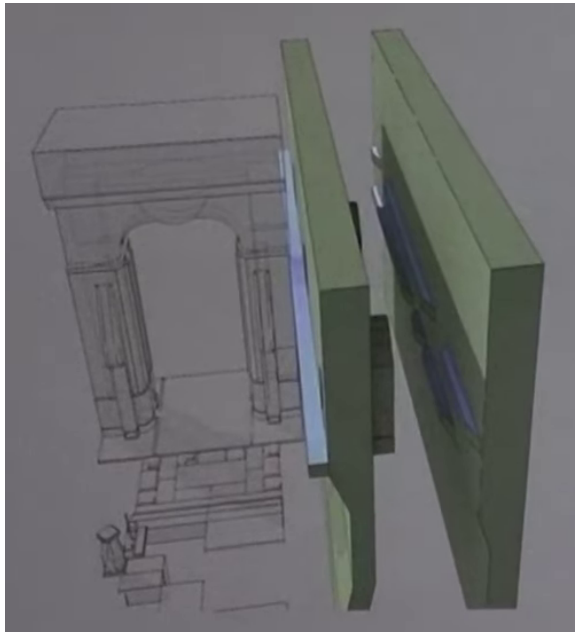
This labeled diagram shows how the various parts of this area fit together. It's a very economic design—everything appears to have a purpose—from the cage structure preventing the trico from flying away, to the Yoroi stationed along the corridor like a security force, it's an area that resonates with a history of 'domestication.'

This mock-up render of the antenna area shows just how designed into its surroundings it is. It's worth noting that despite being deep in the Valley's structure, its location allows sunlight to shine directly upon it.

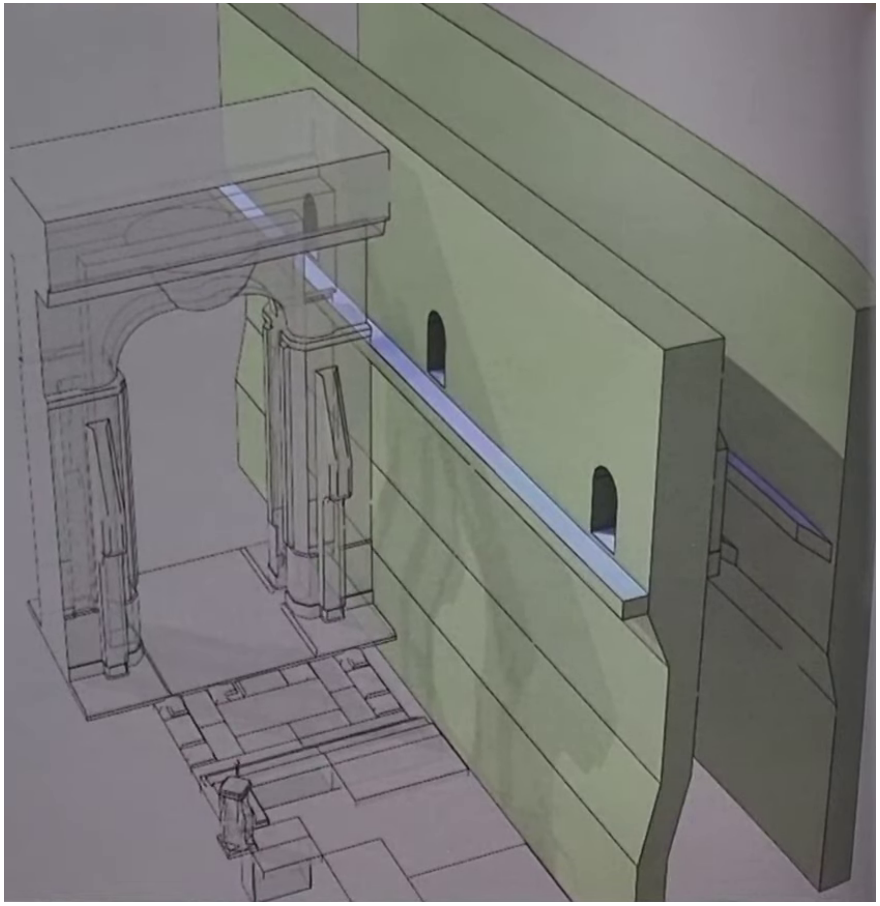
Rough sketches of the antenna room make it impossible not to draw the visual comparison to a birdcage. The way it opens onto the garden terrace above suggests it's a place from which trico creatures could be 'set free.'







The thin ‘gap’ the Boy must traverse to reach the antenna was given a lot of consideration. The sketch here alongside the early development screenshot describes how making the gap wider as it deepens increases the sense of height, and thus the fear of falling.



It’s possible for the Boy to get very close to stationed Yoroi without alerting them to his presence. The top picture here also shows one of the Boy’s many incidental animations—using his hand to lean against the pillar.

This area also introduces the Yoroi, the strange, seemingly sentient suits of armor that harrow the Boy and Trico throughout their journey (for more on these mysterious foes, head to page 30). Their introduction establishes the template for most future encounters: they come alive only when the Boy enters their cone of vision, and will attempt to grab and carry the Boy off (dragging him through the strange blue doors that always accompany their appearance), while attacking Trico with swords and spears. Defeating the Yoroi requires Trico’s offensive might, as it slashes, stomps, and bites its way through them, but the Boy can shove them, climb up their backs, and pull the heads off any that Trico renders temporarily unconscious.

We asked about the inspiration for the Yoroi, and why they look the way they do. “They are covered in the same patterns as the blocks that exist in the environment,” Tanaka says. “We applied this pattern to the Yoroi to indicate that they have common origins with their environment. The reason the patterns in the environment exist is to show the player which areas cannot be interacted with—and also to raise the information density of the background.”

Here we see some earlier Yoroi designs, with more distinctive faces (some overtly birdlike), and horns that were eventually changed to look more like Trico’s.

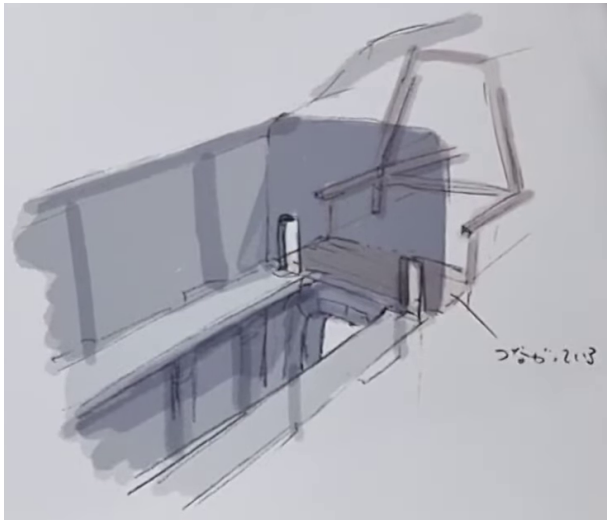
The Strange Green Mist | 09

This outdoor area after the first antenna changed a lot during development. At one point the openings in the slanted building had a shape that wouldn't accommodate Trico's head.

Relieved at escaping the Yoroi, the Boy makes his way across a beautiful garden terrace to call his companion. But Trico quickly becomes transfixed by green mist emanating from a mysterious building…

The strange green mist that Trico encounters seems to play a central role in the ecology of the Valley, but its exact origin and purpose are obscured. Emanating from large pots at different points in the game, it stops Trico in its tracks, as it becomes fixed on the scent; "it smells like Trico's favorite food," Tanaka tells us, along with the information that the substance in the pot is comprised of the same material found in the barrels that are scattered around.

Jumping ahead a bit in the story, we asked Ueda to explain the workings behind the sacrifice of the children that both powers the Valley and feeds the trico creatures. "It's not just the barrels themselves that matter for the tricos. The chosen ones aren't transformed into barrels or anything, but into something much more important—and as a byproduct, the stuff that's in the barrels is produced. It is probably related to the mist that comes from the pots, and the energy that powers the Yoroi. But at first I was thinking about the sarcophagus in the mirror room, and that energy being used to revive or bring to life whatever is in it."



There are a few areas in the game where corridors or rooms also feature smaller walkways above them, as in this small tunnel that takes the Boy from the antenna room to the well leading outside.

Trico getting its head stuck was introduced earlier as one of its charming instinctual behaviors—something that can occur when the beast is curious, but doesn't affect progression. Here, however, it is guaranteed to happen as Trico is unable to resist the lure of the smell, and progression relies on getting the creature to regain its senses and pull its head back out.

While at times the mist appears more blue than green, or vice versa, that’s merely a result of the post-effects used in different scenes—there’s only one type of mist in the game.

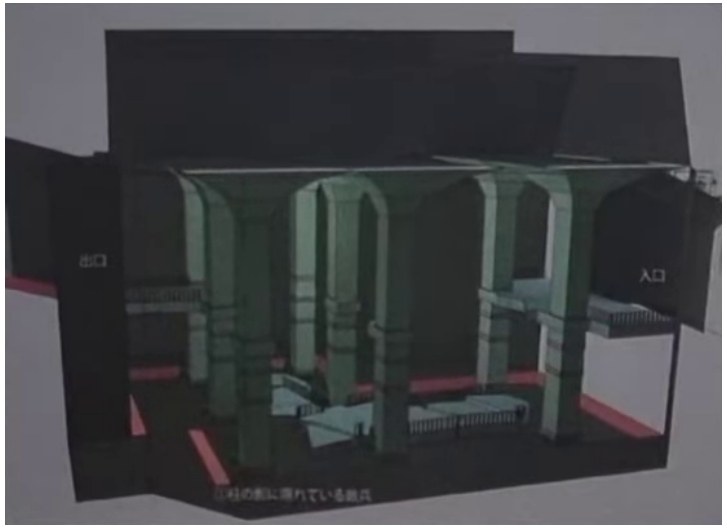
10 | The First Sighting

Emerging high above an open area, Trico wasted no time in jumping down. The Boy can either grab some feathers and hitch a lift, or make his way down the dilapidated scaffolding on the area's edge.

A memorable area for a few reasons, most notably the silhouette of another, darker trico (if you're quick enough to pan the camera up to see what's getting Trico's attention). It's also a place to watch Trico splash around adorably in a puddle, and take in some interesting crumbling architecture—a large central building structure, a series of tall arches that the other Trico prowls around on, and the remains of a fallen staircase flanking the far wall of the surrounding canyon.

Near the end of the game this area can be seen in the distance far below—easy to make out even through the vastness of the space and the clouds of mist, because the tall arches here are very distinct among structures in the Valley.

We were curious about the team's process of degeneration—do they imagine their worlds as ruined from the start, or do they begin with them more intact, before degrading them through the art process? Tanaka tells us that while they start with the destroyed version first, there's deign thought that goes into the process to keep the world believable. "If we need to have a broken pillar here, it needs to have come from somewhere, and the level design will point to that."



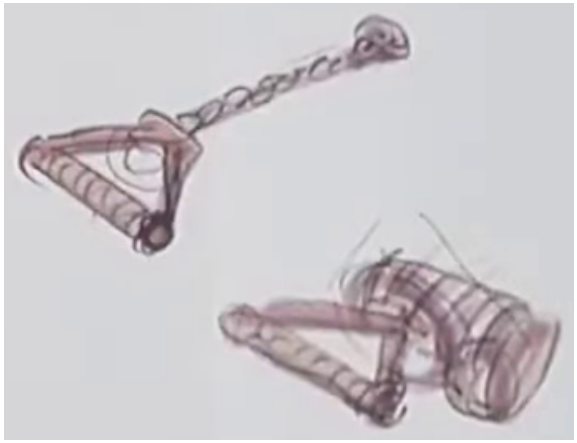
The crumbled walkway on the floor is already present in this early render of the pillar room, and more Yoroi are stationed than in the final game.

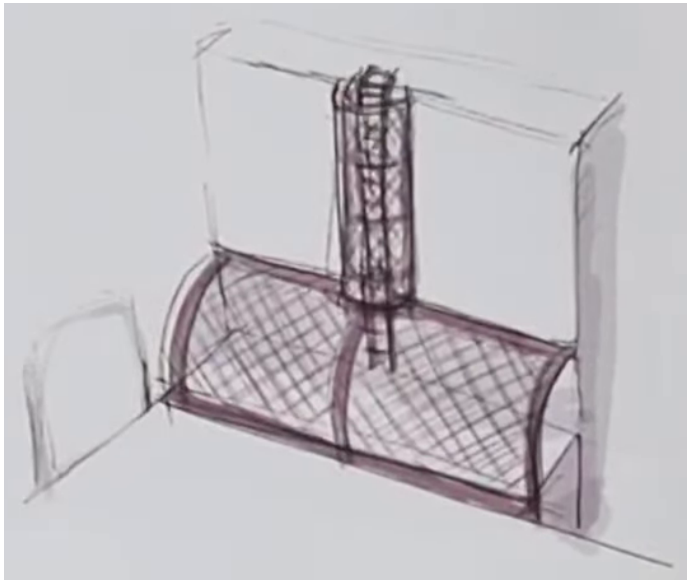
This ‘pillar room’ is the game’s first freeform combat encounter, in which you can choose to help Trico by shoving the Yoroi and luring them around the room, or simply climb onto its back and wait until the fighting is over.

Trico Gets Stuck | 11

After passing through a raised gate Trico's weight triggers a pressure plate, causing the gate to slam down upon its tail. With the creature trapped, the Boy must find a way to free his companion.

There are countless mechanisms throughout the Nest that seem to have once served a very specific purpose, perhaps before the tricos inhabited the space (if such a time existed). We asked the team if the functions of these elements are built into the fiction of the game, beyond serving the immediate level design. Tanaka tells us that all of the design processes basically started from the level designs, and after that each location was given meaning. Suzuki builds on his response: "It's not that we didn't think we could have designed it all from a narrative perspective first. If we wanted to we could have done that, but it was intentional to not go too deep into function because it would narrow the experience…it might detract from the world we were trying to create, which was a different world. Applying real-world logic to every part of *The Last Guardian*'s world would just result in something a lot like our own world."

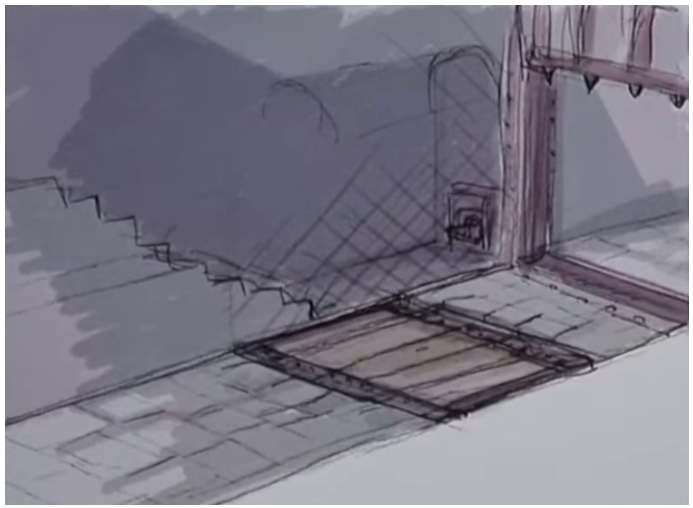




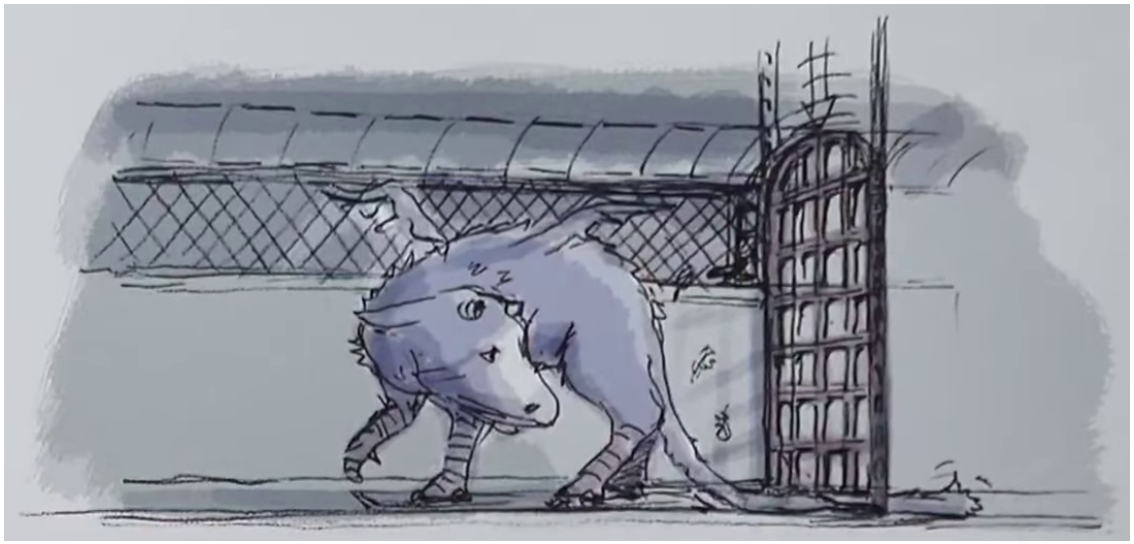
The chain switch here is well-guarded and enclosed by a metal cage, suggesting that it's there for use at times when a trico isn't quite under the Core's control.

With Trico under duress, this section seems designed to put pressure on the player to solve things swiftly if they care about their companion. That's not exactly the case, though. The intention of this scene, according to the team, was "to function as a tutorial for situations where the Boy must help Trico, and also to show the player that the Boy can seek refuse in Trico when he is being chased by enemies." Players who run straight for the switch and try to free Trico before it defeats the Yoroi will find this section challenging, but far from impossible. If the player lures the Yoroi towards Trico first though, they'll get through the scene easily and will have learned a useful lesson.

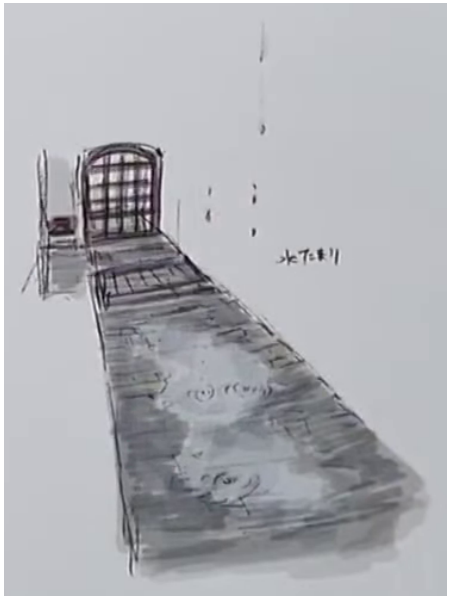
After successfully freeing Trico, the beast will notice a lone Yoroi at the end of the long corridor that leads outside. The scene that follows, in which Trico dashes down the corridor to attack the Yoroi, was present in the game's first trailed, from E3 2009.



As Ueda points out, "if we didn't restrict Trico by clamping its tail here, it would approach enemies on its own and there would be no need for the Boy to lure enemies towards the creature."



This type of scene was one of many for which the team made mini-storyboards. In this case, they show how Trico should react to its tail being caught under the gate.



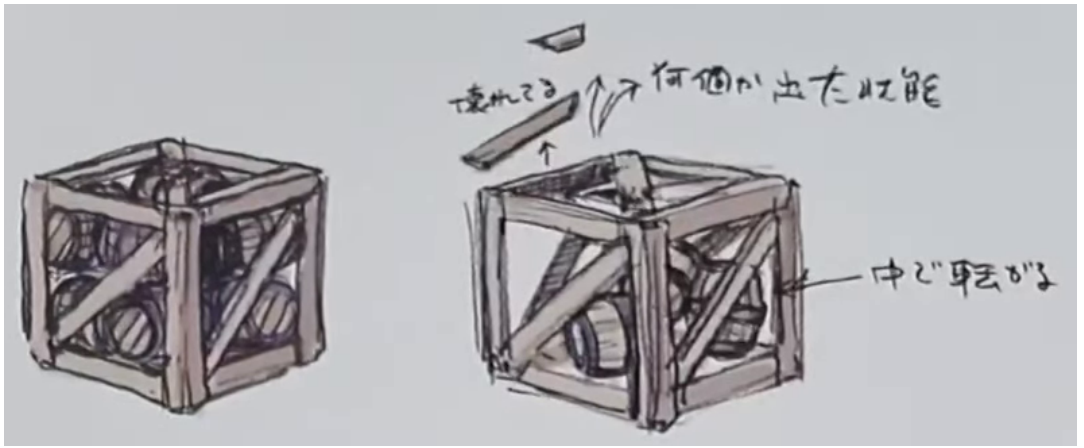
Tight interior sections such as this were subject to many tweaks to ensure that they accommodated Trico's every possible movement.

Gaining Control | 12

The pair reach an impasse: Trico refuses to cross a broken bridge. The creature gains a new willingness to follow the Boy's commands after being shown a box filled with small barrels of food.

As far as our adventures have come, there are stymied by the yawning gap of a broken bridge, crumbled to the depths below. Without being able to tell Trico precisely where to go (to jump the gap), and without the Boy being able to cross the divide himself and then call back from the other side, they are at an impasse. Thankfully, this is also a moment in which the companionship felt between Trico and the Boy has reached new heights, their relationship becoming one of true interdependency and trust. We are told this through the narration, and players are given a means of issuing commands to Trico directly.

"The beast could not find a way forward. But we had come so far together. And in so doing, we had developed a bond. A mutual understanding that offered us a chance of escape… The beast had grown accustomed to my company. So accustomed, in fact, that it began to mimic my movements. I ran, jumped, capered, and cavorted. And in so doing, I learned something of what the beast might be encouraged to do."



The original sketch for the crate here had a lot more barrels in it, but the final crate is otherwise very similar.

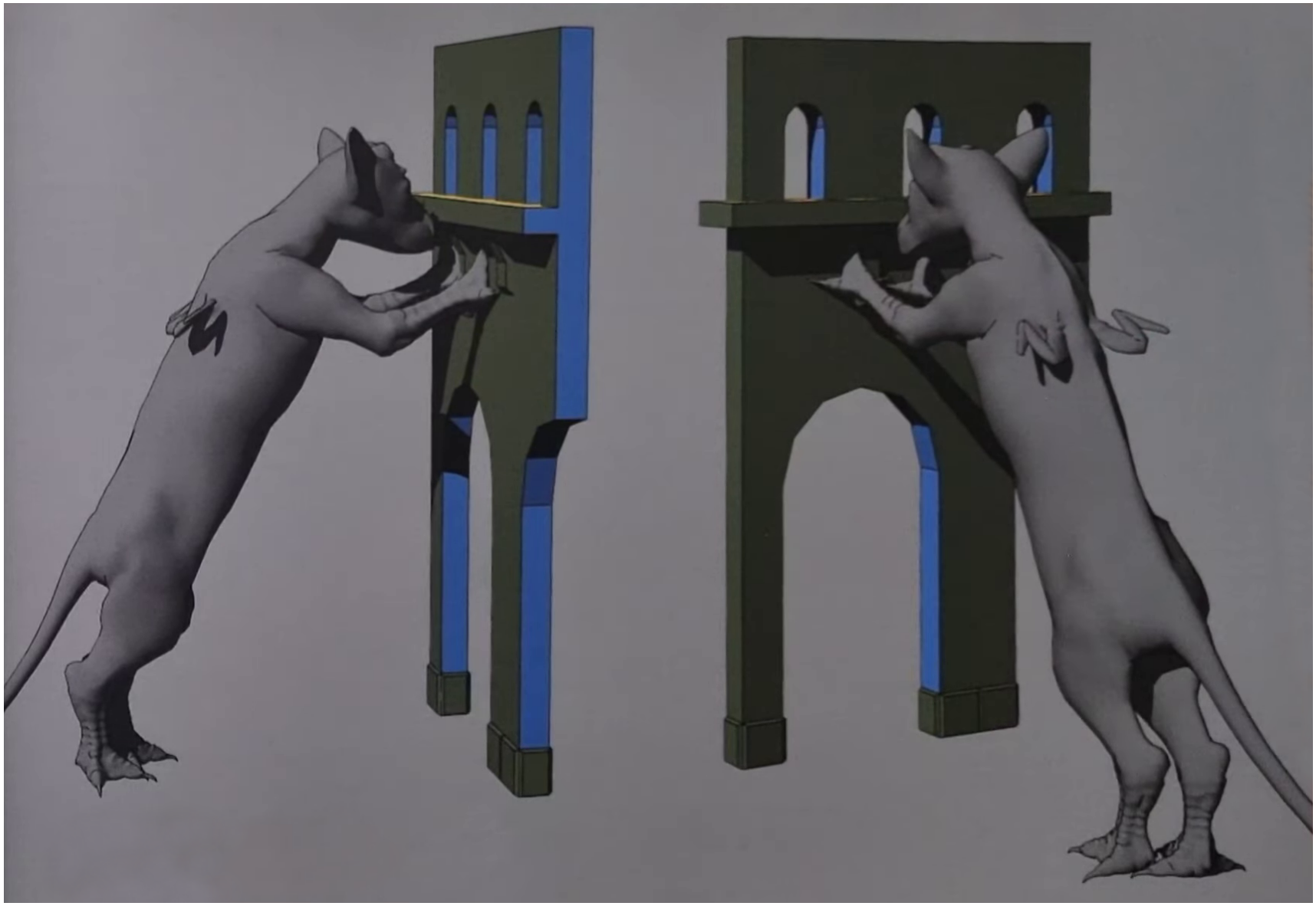
There are several commands that can now be issued to Trico, though the functions assigned to each button and the exact results are left unexplained.

To expound on that last command, it basically sets a target for Trico if you want to draw its attention to something specific. You can complete the game without ever using it, but it can be helpful when Trico's attention wanders.

The development team have no specific best practices for controlling Trico, but we've found that it's most helpful to give it one command at a time, and give it a moment to complete that action before issuing more. While Trico is one of the most complex elements in the game in many ways, interacting with it can be one of the most simplistic, as Tanaka explains: "The only thing players can really do is to influence the things Trico is interested in, by pointing to something or clapping."

The area on the other side of the broken bridge was carefully designed to ensure that Trico couldn't jump up somewhere that it wasn't supposed to.

For players looking to attain the 'Lightning Emissary' trophy (beating the game in five hours or less), or simply have the most obedient relationship with Trico possible, there are a few extra tips to keep in mind. First, make sure to have the Boy facing in the direction that you want Trico to go when you're issuing commands. Second, when possible, also face the camera in the direction that you want Trico to go, as it does have an effect. For example, if you want Trico to go down somewhere, first face the Boy in that direction, and then move the camera to look down to the destination before giving the command.



We asked the team why they chose this point in the story to give the Boy more command over Trico. “This is a game design decision, to introduce elements little by little,” Tanji tells us. “in the progression of the gameplay, we didn’t want to overwhelm the player too early.”

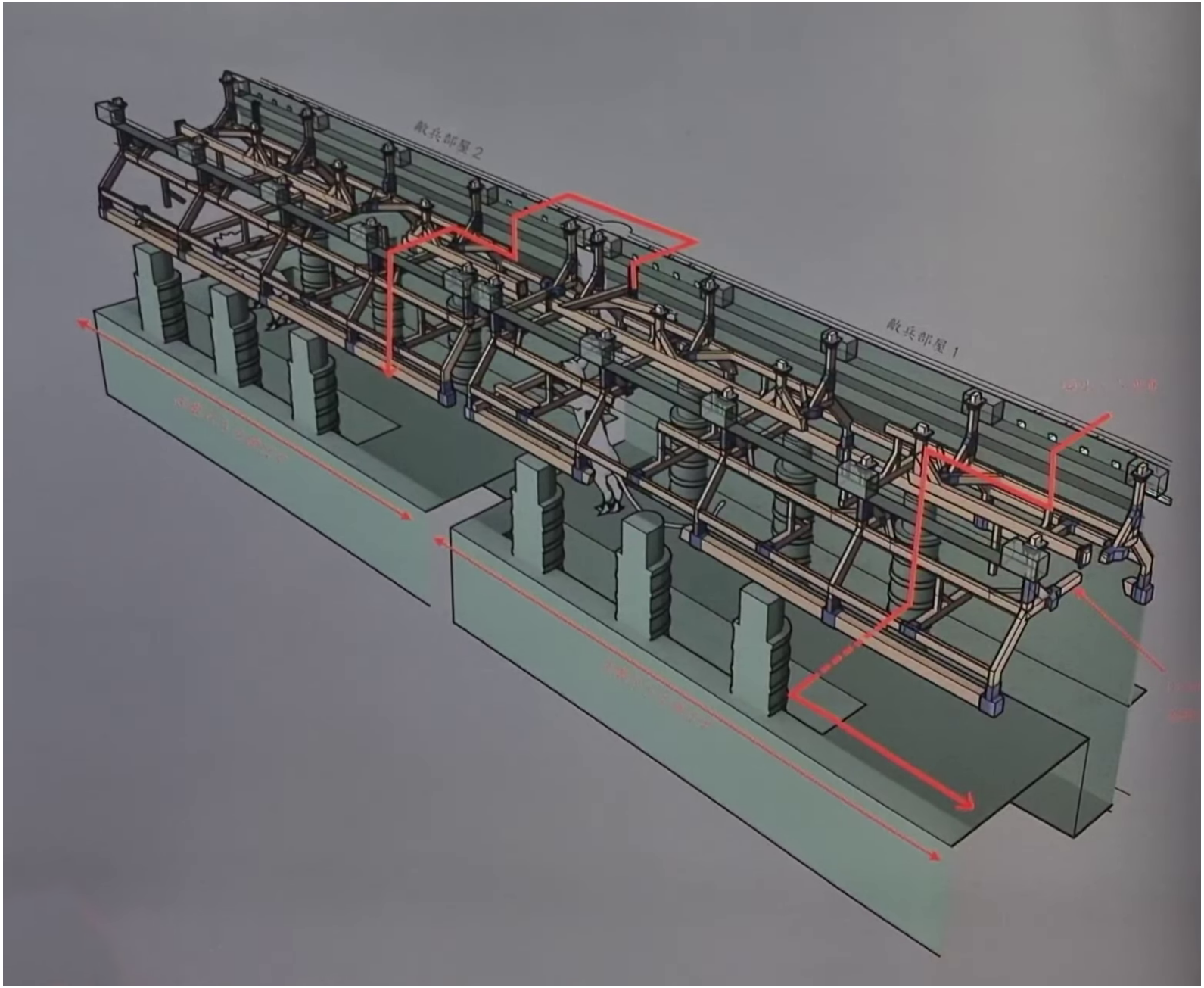
On The Rafters | 13

A small gap in the structure's wall takes the Boy into a room guarded by Yoroi. He's far above them, though, and must tread carefully to avoid falling into their grasp.

After falling from the rafters, the Boy must sneak past several 'searchlight' Yoroi, rotating slowly in a squat position, only springing to life if the Boy crosses their vision. The Boy's sneaking animation is fairly robust, but rarely used—the team originally considered including more gameplay involving sneaking around guards, but it was never realized in the game. In the earliest videos of the game, you can see the Boy peeking around a pillar to spy on a patrolling Yoroi. There's also a moment in one of the game's trailers that shows the Boy sneaking past Trico to avoid waking it, but that was done only for the trailer and was never a functioning game mechanic.

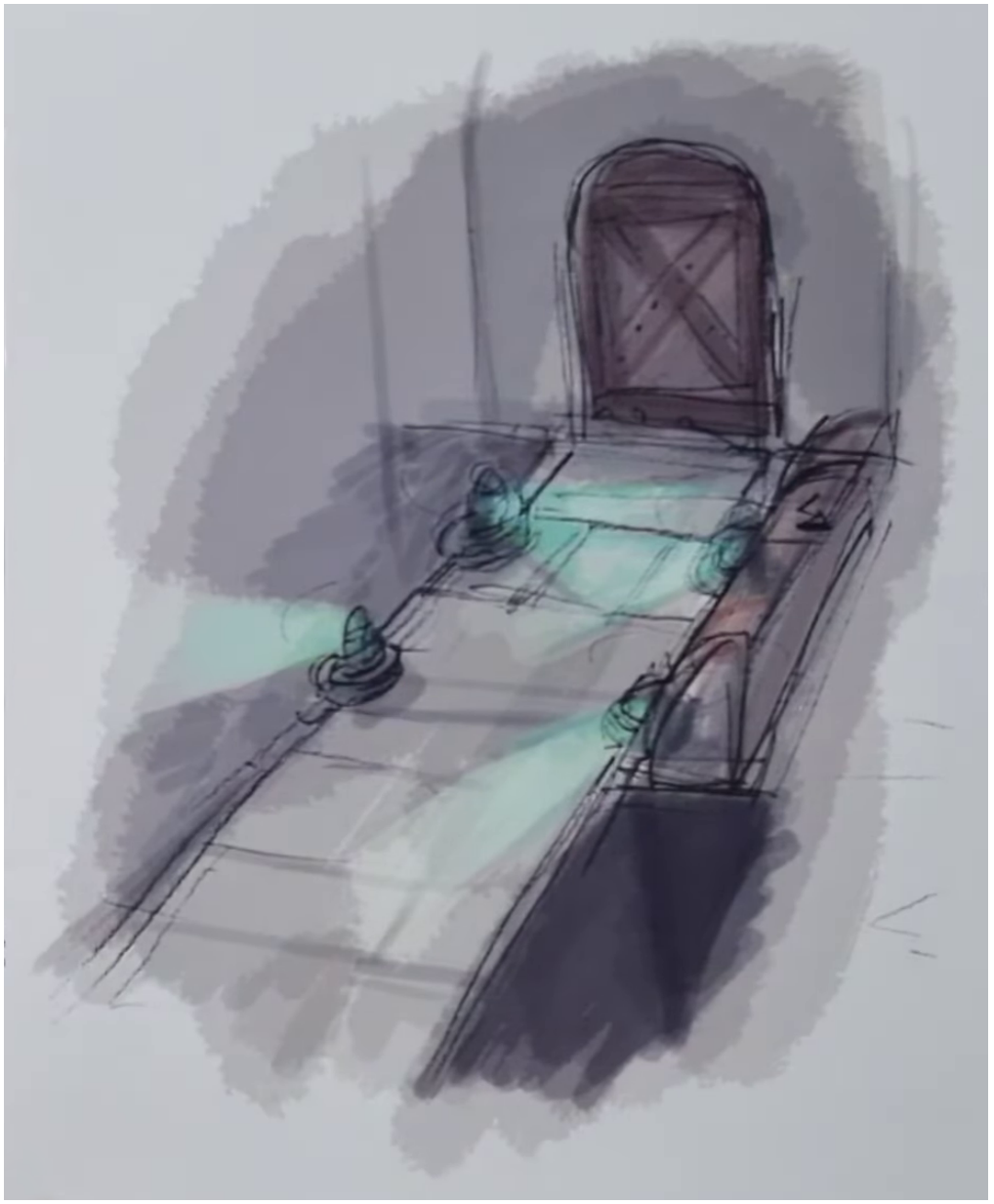
We asked if it's possible to make it all the way along the beams to the other side of the rooms here (even though doing so wouldn't be especially useful for the player). The team say that they "wanted a design that would make it necessary to drop down to the floor where the Yoroi are (at least in the second room)." In the end, you can't make it all the way across, but you do get to choose where you drop down. The team say that the design ensures "there's a strong chance that you'll follow a certain route."

There are precious few sketches of the Yoroi to show, simply because their design was solidified very early in the game's production.


衛兵部屋 2
衛兵部屋 1

Though not necessarily the safest way to tackle these rooms (for those who don't want to risk dying while attempting the 'Untouchable Emissary' trophy), the quickest approach is to go straight across to the opposite wall so that you're directly above the spinning Yoroi, and drop down from there using the wall to split the fall into two drops (as shown above). If you watch the Yoroi's rotations, it's possible to time the fall so that you can land and pull the chain while they are looking away. This removes the need to use the tunnels under the main platform and lets Trico enter the room straight away—even in the second room.

The image on the opposite page shows the 'optimal' route that most players will take to cross the beams and fall safely. It was made by Ueda himself.

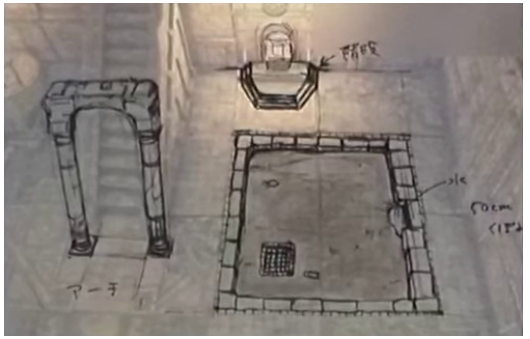


14 | A Pot On A Chain

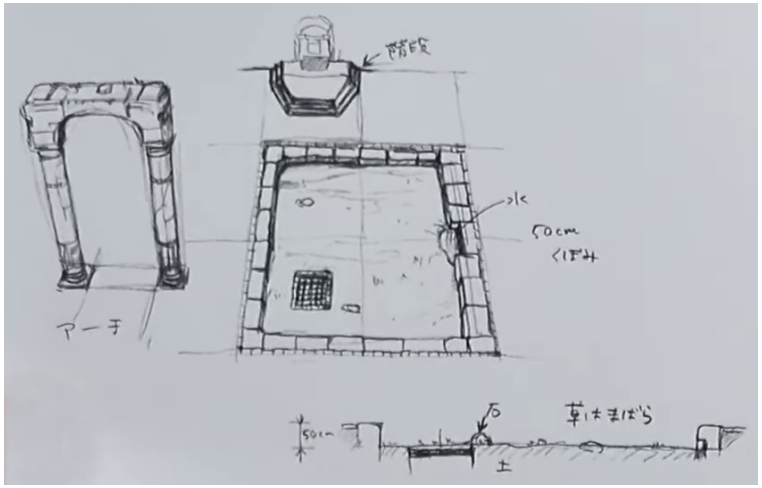
The receptacle may be smaller, but the fumes that emanate from it have no less of a grip on Trico's attention. This time, however, that grip might be put to use…

As most players will have noticed, the blue butterflies that appear throughout the game have a very specific function: helping players to locate the 48 hidden barrels (unlike the yellow butterflies, which are merely set dressing). Tanaka tells us that their inspiration was to provide a 'radar' of sorts for players, indicating that a barrel is nearby—the number of butterflies will even increase as you get closer, from one, to two, to three.

We asked if there is any thematic significance to the butterflies; Tanji explained: "The butterflies relate to both the game design and the game's themes. They are somewhat inspired by a Japanese folk tradition [think 'urban legend'] that can pull the spirit out of a person. One of the flashback scenes in the game actually references this (when the Boy is sleeping the butterfly flits in and out of the frame, just above his face)." Sakai adds that when Ueda was designing the butterflies, he looked closely at the Boy's tattoos, as they are all connected as part of the game's theme. (And though it may be too difficult to see in-game, the design of the butterflies actually includes Ueda's signature!)



This room is filled with small intricacies that required a lot of art direction from genDESIGN to JAPAN Studio. When the team wanted something to be very specifically modeled they would use multiple views to ensure clarity.

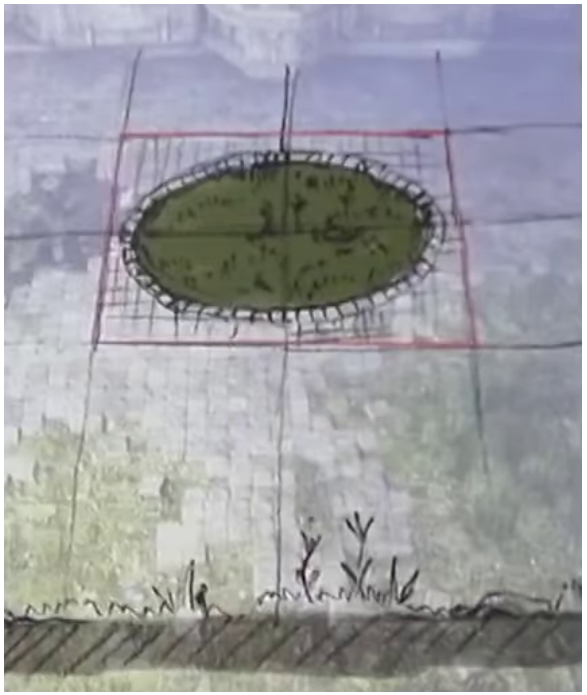


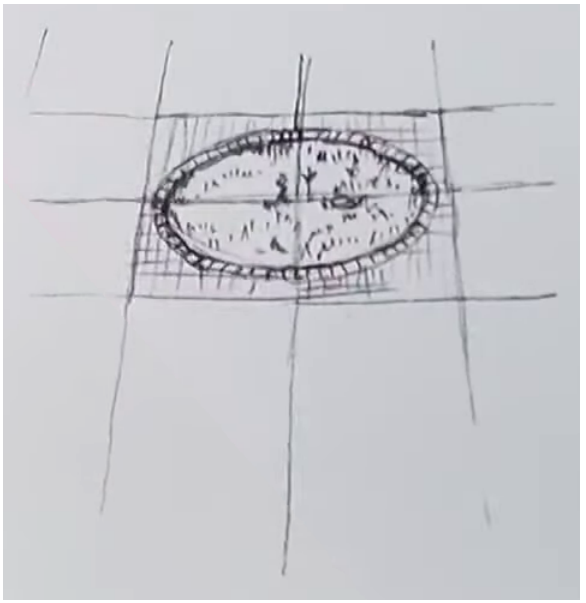
The sketches for art direction often use very specific measurements for small details, such as this small incline with a drain, complete with puddle.

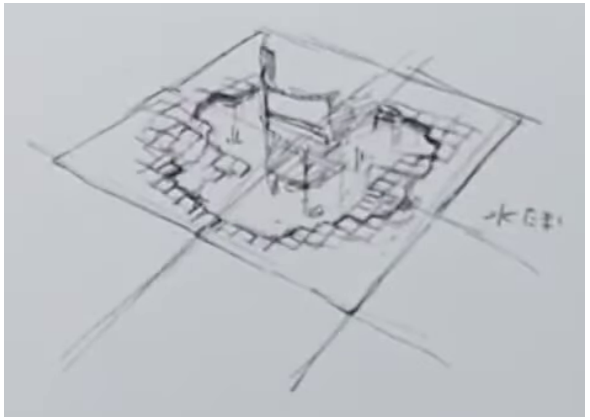
Many of the artworks we've seen have been overlaid onto early environment screenshots, so we inquired as to why the team used so many of these 'draw-overs.' Ueda says that this was a large part of their process in working with JAPAN Studio. "They are mostly used for art direction," he says. "We sent them to JAPAN Studio to show how the details should look. There's some level design in them to, but most of them were made for art direction from genDESIGN to JAPAN Studio."

We asked if all of the vines in the game were placed using these draw-overs. "No," Ueda said, "the vines were placed using references to a document filled with sketches like this." Essentially, they created guidelines for how the vines should look based on lots of different sketches, so that each and every environment didn't need to get the 'draw-over' treatment.

We asked why the team chose the image of the Boy standing in this area for the game's initial loading screen. "Because that area was one of the first to be fully completed, and we were happy with how it looked," Tanaka told us.







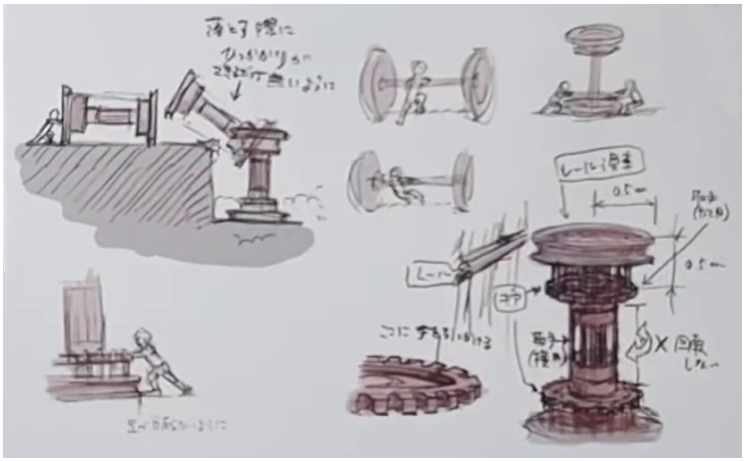
The team says these ‘draw-overs’ were never used to test details and features on top of various different environments—they were always created with one single area in mind.

The Walls Have Eyes | 15

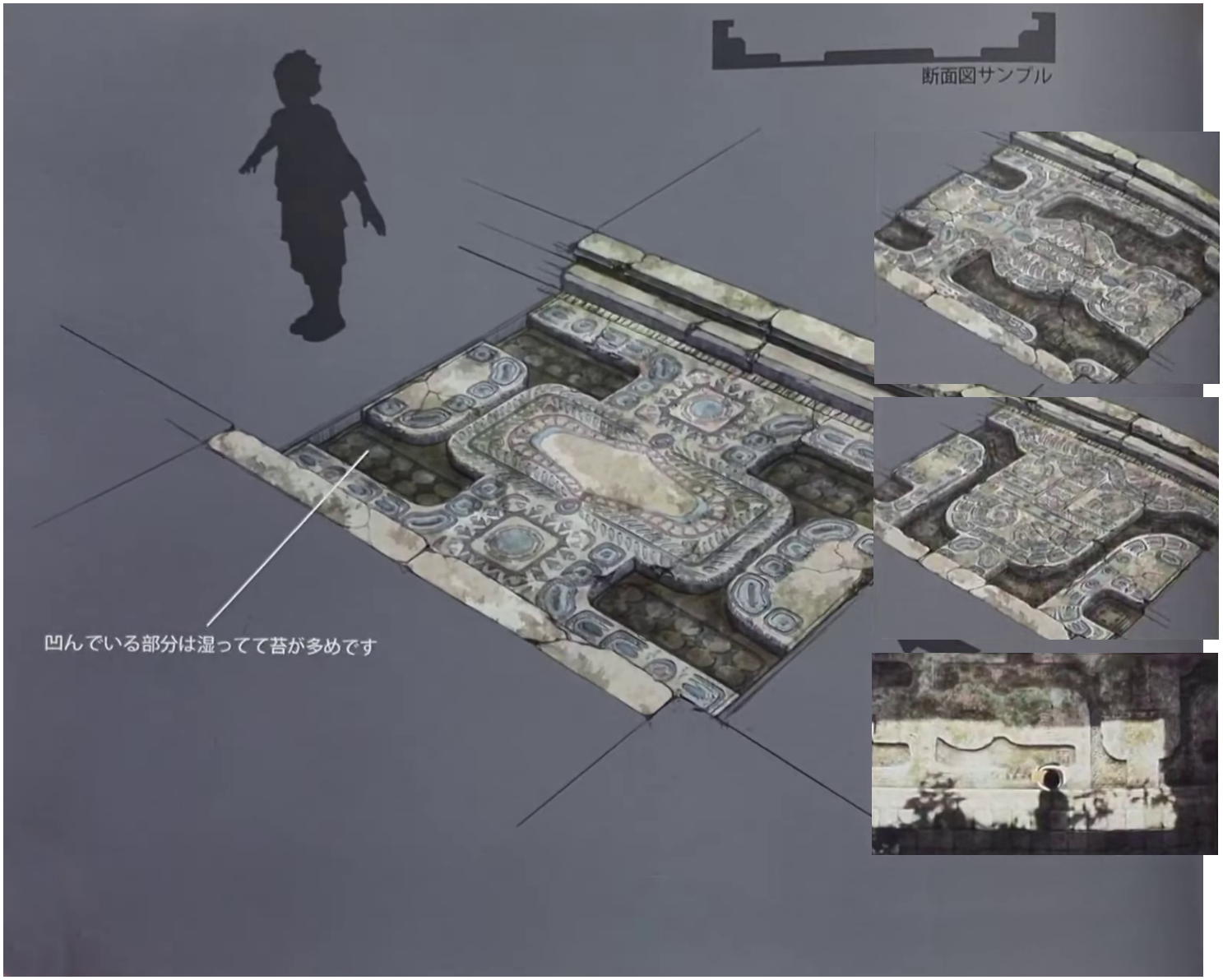
Eyes hang on the walls, warding off tricos that might use this as an exit route. The Boy can easily destroy them, though, easing his companion's mood and gaining its trust as he does so.

The stained glass eyes have made a few appearances up to this point, largely as discarded relics that must be shoved aside before Trico will advance. Here, they start to appear more prominently, and more often fully intact (even protected with metal bars at times), seemingly placed with intention.

The glass eyes originally came from an illustration by Ueda, based on the concept of Japanese 'toriyoke' ('bird-repeller'), round scarecrow-like objects used to scare off birds. The eyeball is a traditional toriyoke pattern, and is even more overtly realized in the game's glass eyes. The toriyoke influence also speaks to the birdlike elements of Trico, made more obvious in the Japanese title of the game (which, by the way of a reminder, refers to Trico as an 'ōwashi,' or 'great eagle').



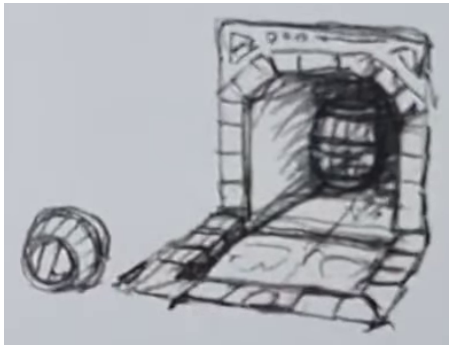
This axle-like object serves as a good example of wringing several smaller puzzle steps out of a simple set-up; players must first figure out how to get it to the top of the ramp, then determine that they need to push it over the edge (reorienting it), and then push it under the gate with just the right timing as Trico pulls the nearby chain.



There’s a highly-detailed relief on the ground in this area, that features patterns much like those seen on the walls of Sentinel Tower.

Many players are curious to see what happens here when you throw all of the Yoroi helmets (that you need in order to destroy the glass eyes) down to the lower level, since there's no way to carry them back up. In the rare instance that all three become inaccessible, they simply reappear in place. It wasn't always like that, though; there was a time when barrels were used to break the eyes, and the team tried adding a hole in the wall that would spit out more barrels when needed. Two versions of this 'barrel dispenser' were envisioned, one at ground level, and one up high on the wall (as can be seen in these concept sketches). Such an automated feature, used only here, may have stood out too much against the rest of the world design though, so the barrel dispenser was removed. The use of Yoroi helmets is less intrusive, and keeps the focus on the glass eyes.

We noticed that during the cutscene in which Trico kidnaps the Boy from his village, the villagers band on a large gong in alarm—a gong emblazoned with a familiar eye shape. "The idea is that there's a legend or folk wisdom (in the village) that the eyeball marks will scare away the tricos, so there's definitely thought put into that."

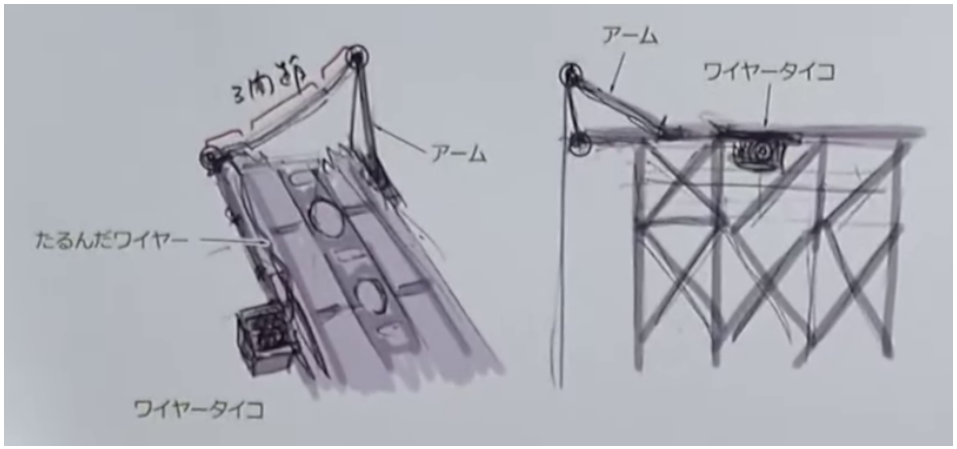


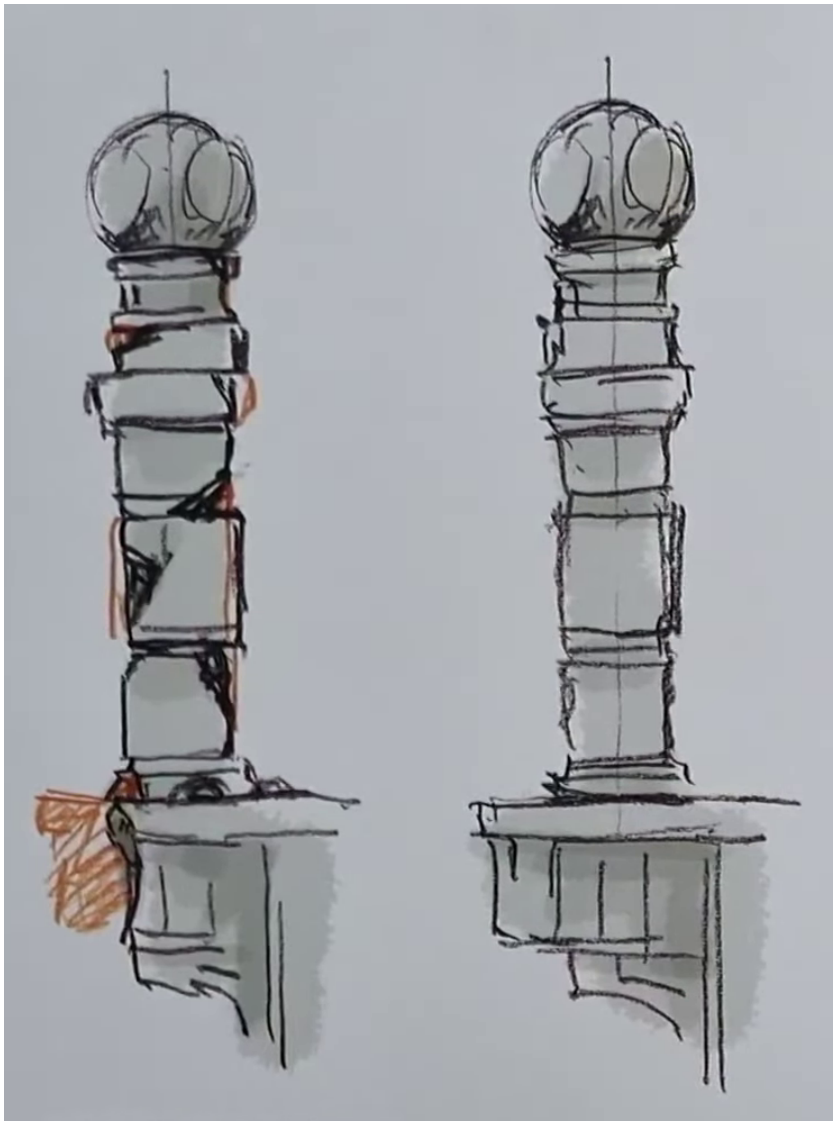
16 | Trusting Trico

Out once again in the blazing sunlight, now high above the broken bridge they had crossed earlier, but still the Valley's structures tower above the pair—there's a long way to go.

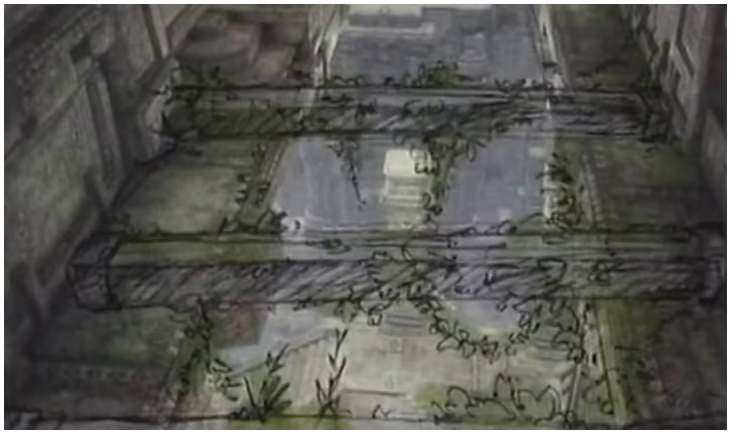
This area of the game will be familiar to many gamers, as it was used to re-reveal the game to fans during E3 2015. Originally in development as a PlayStation®3 game, due to the game's extended development time—in various states of production beginning in 2007 until its release in 2016—it became a PlayStation®4 game, with the E3 demo being the first time fans had seen it running on the newer system.

The structure and flow of the level design was actually fixed and completed on PlayStation®3 (along with the puzzles and functioning AI), though there were issues with the game running out of memory and not hitting the targeted 30 frames per second, and the game could only be completed by pulling up a debug menu to change levels (rather than the seamless interconnected experience we see in the final game). The cutscenes didn't exist then either; Tanji began helping out with storyboards for them beginning around late 2014.





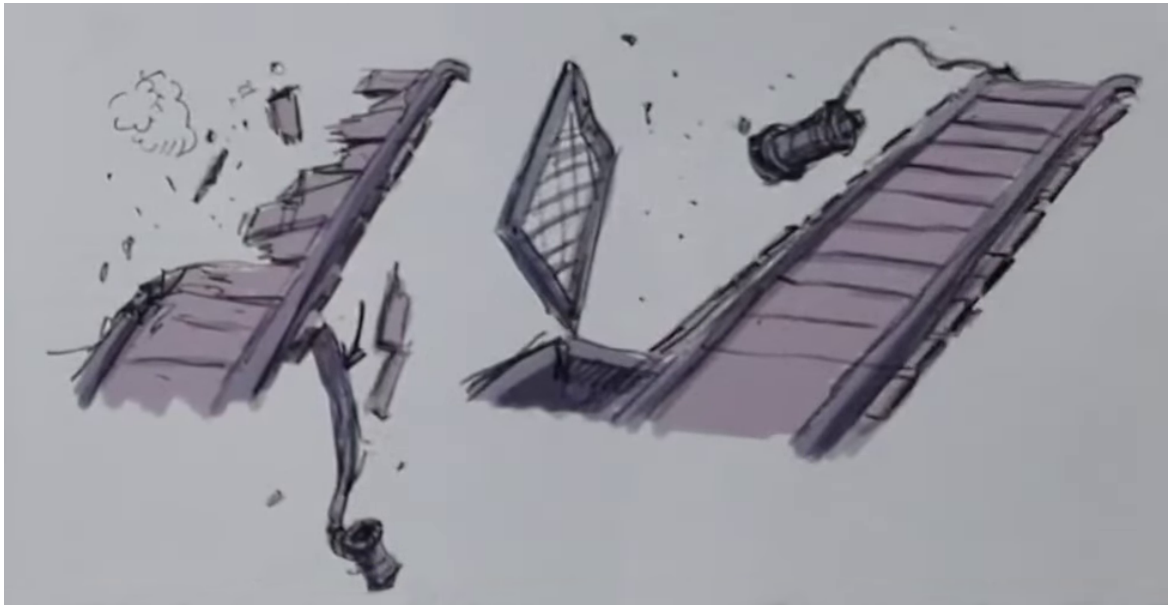
In the E3 2015 demo version, the Boy goes outside first and then Trico emerges from the corridor with a leap, destroying a stone pillar and sending it crumbling into the chasm below. Tanaka tells us that this can still happen in the final game, but you need to make Trico run outside, so that it comes to an abrupt stop just before the edge.



This scene introduces the concept of the Boy being caught by Trico—either in its beak or with its tail—at specific moments, after particularly risky jumps and falls. This can actually happen dynamically as well, thanks to a back-end AI of sorts that kicks in during desperation situations, causing Trico's tail to whip out to meet the Boy in midair.

The first time that Trico catches the Boy is beautifully composed, from the music, to the slow motion—a pitch-perfect emotional beat. We asked the team how it ended up where it did in the game, and how they approached such an important moment. Tanaka answers that, "Ueda-san wanted that from early on. That scene didn't change too much, it was designed that way and ended up that way. In terms of slow motion, if players felt that time was slowing down, at those kinds of moments in your life, that we should add the same kind of elements to the game. In terms of level design, it's been around for a long time, it's just been a lot of polish work over time."

The team says that "A lot of the environmental destruction was done to raise the information density," meaning that they wanted the environment to feel rich and detailed. "It's one of the reasons we chose 'ruins' as a setting—we considered the freedom we would have to construct levels (and that it wouldn't feel unnatural to have broken pieces whenever we wanted them)," Tanaka says.

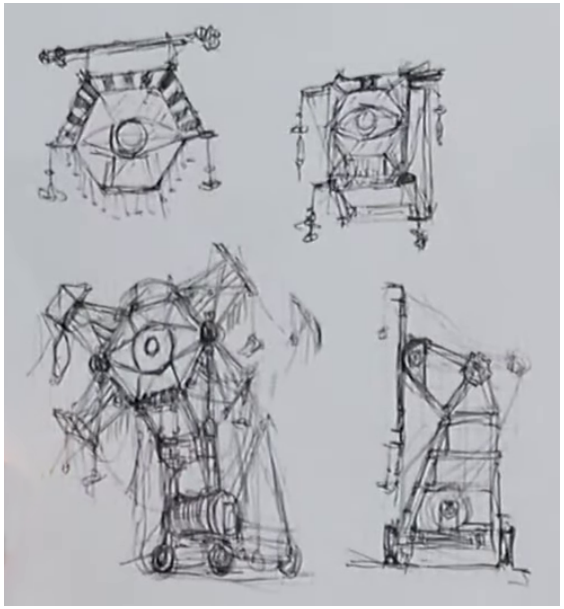


17 | The Giant Mobile

A hanging glass eye looms ahead as soon as the pair emerge from the gloomy interior. With Trico held at bay, the Boy ventures precariously upward to remove the dreaded obstacle.

The glass eyes return in force, hanging down from large mobile-like structures that must be destroyed before Trico will advance. Here, they are counterweighted with large rings of stone, reminiscent of compact discs. This is likely an intentional similarity—just like ‘toriyoke’ are used to scare away birds, in Japan it is said that hanging CDs can be used to scare away stray cats. And Trico, of course, lies somewhere on the spectrum of both creatures.

This is but one of several subtle references to real-world technology strewn throughout *The Last Guardian*, from the button symbols of the DUALSHOCK®4 wireless controller making several diegetic appearances, to the way that Trico is ‘paired’ with the Boy, and the oddly familiar physical design of the antennas that send the signal that controls Trico… This characteristic of Ueda’s games extends back to *Shadow of the Colossus*, where the save points were inspired by the design of the PlayStation®2’s memory card. We asked the team if this was a purposeful larger theme in the game, and their answer actually speaks to something more personal than that. “The game is something of a reflection of the design team,” Tanaka tells us. “We have these things in our lives—CDs, memory cards—there’s an intentionality behind it, but it’s not supposed to be a theme. They are artifacts of our development team.



The larger glass eyes are decorated with hanging tassels, and even little stone sculptures. This of course begs the question of who created these curios. Tanji gives us perhaps the only answer we could expect: “There was thought that the eyes were built to control Trico, there’s history to it, so there’s intentionality to show that someone created these, that they were created by someone in this world.”

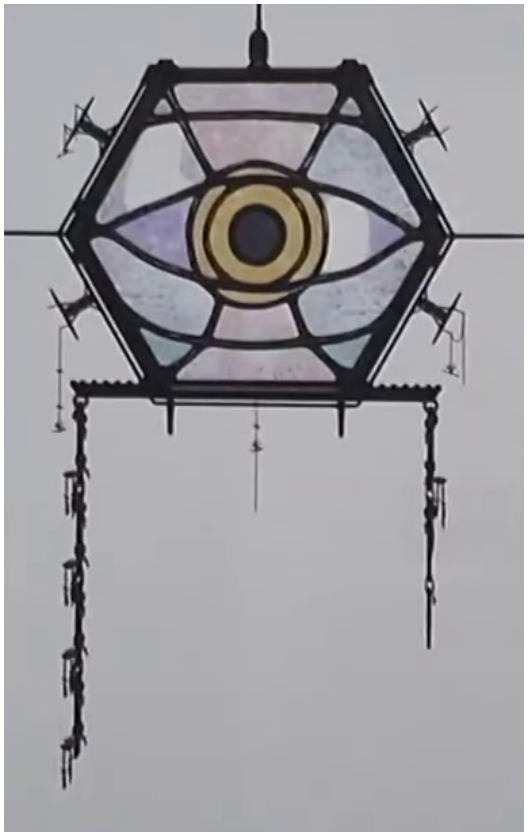
The small towers here are shown to have been part of a rail cart network, with the track splitting off in two directions. In the final game Trico can sit atop this first tower if you climb it and then call out for it, though there’s no benefit in doing so.

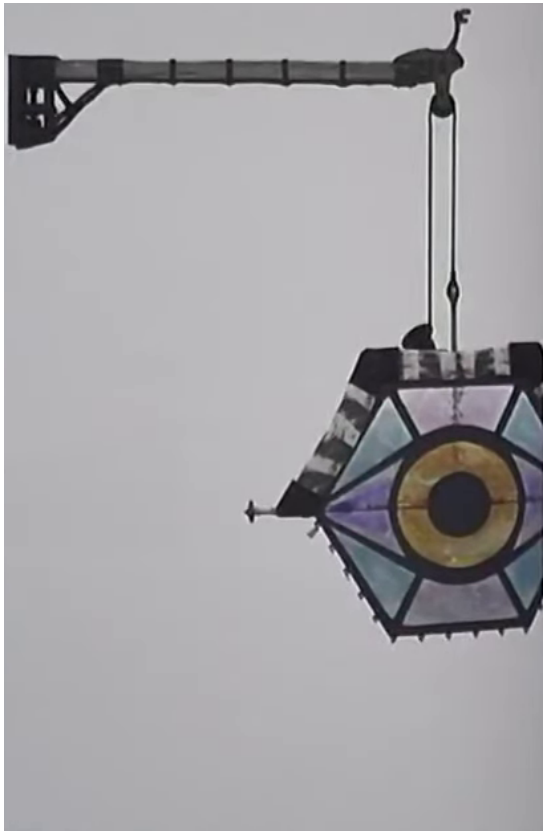
For those familiar with the team's previous work, one can't help but connect the hanging cages to shoe found in *ICO*, that Yorda is rescued from. This would be presumptuous though, as there's no intentional connection; rather, they're simply meant to reflect the 'bird' theme that runs through the game, and fit in with the broader aesthetic of the world.

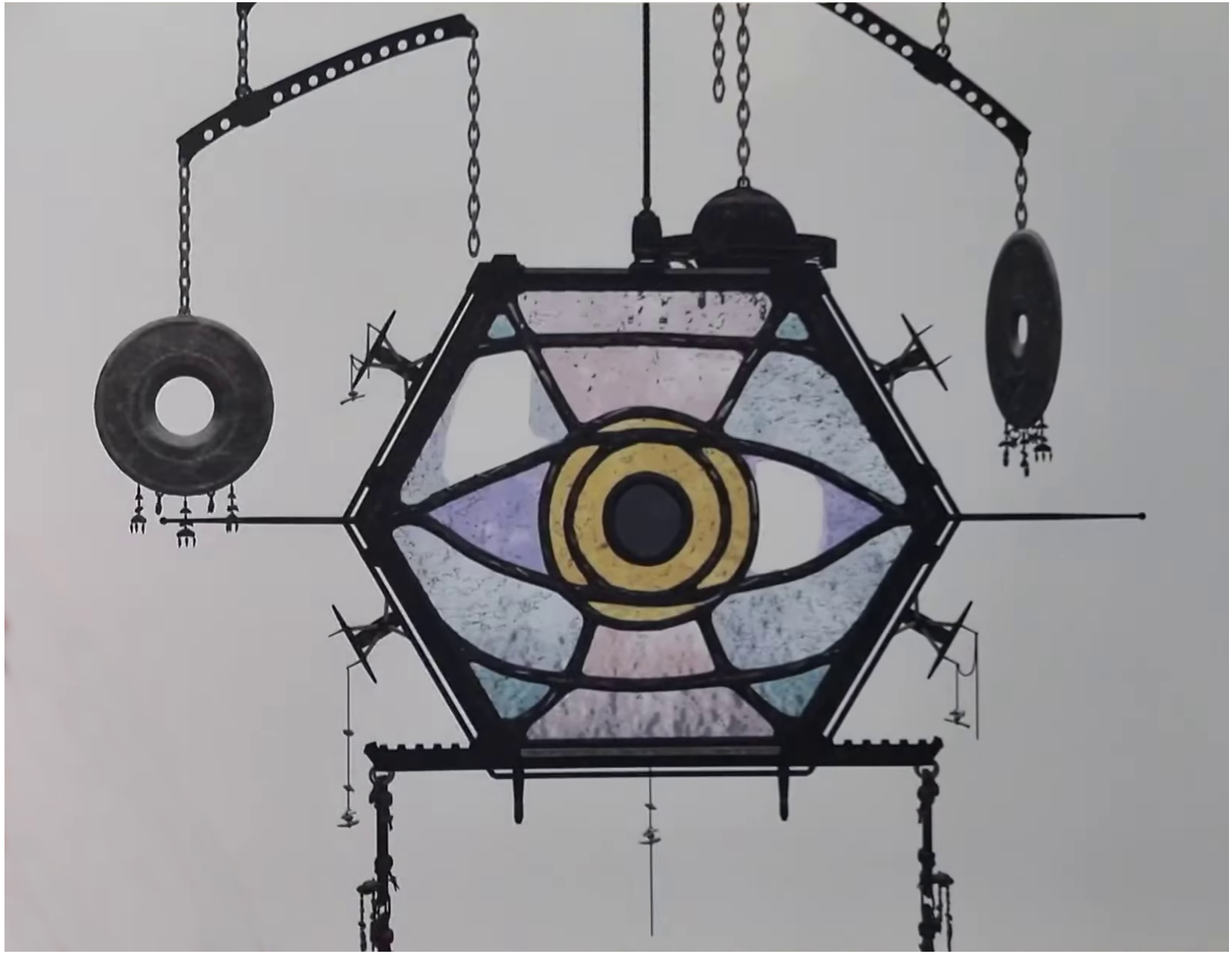
Moving the game to PlayStation®4 took up a significant chunk of the game's total development time. It involved redoing a lot of the engine, and then a change of workflow when genDESIGN came into existence to take over the creative direction. That process began in early 2012 and wasn't complete until early 2015, at which point the level design and iteration began again. This meant continuing to polish and iterate on the game, adding new elements within levels to either manage or extend the experience, but never whole new parts.

Along with the improved graphical fidelity that goes with newer technology, the team was able to better execute game elements that were a challenge on PlayStation®3, such as the swaying plants and vines seen throughout the game, including more particles to make the bodies of water look more convincing, and having more enemies (and more trico creatures) on screen towards the end of the game. It wasn't about changing the game design, but rather enhancing the most demanding scenes.

Here we see some of the many different configurations of the hanging glass eyes, some with wooden framing and others with a thin metal rim. The eye-shaped pattern changes according to the material, too.



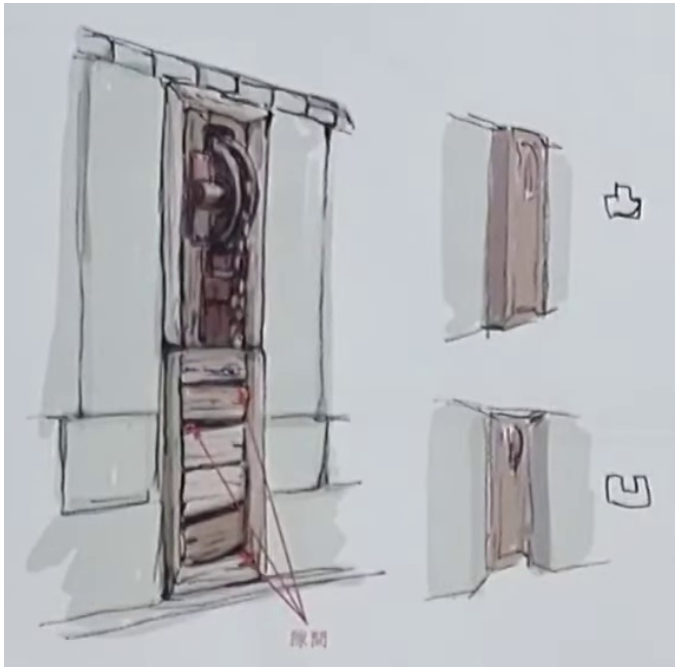




18 | Chased By The Yoroi

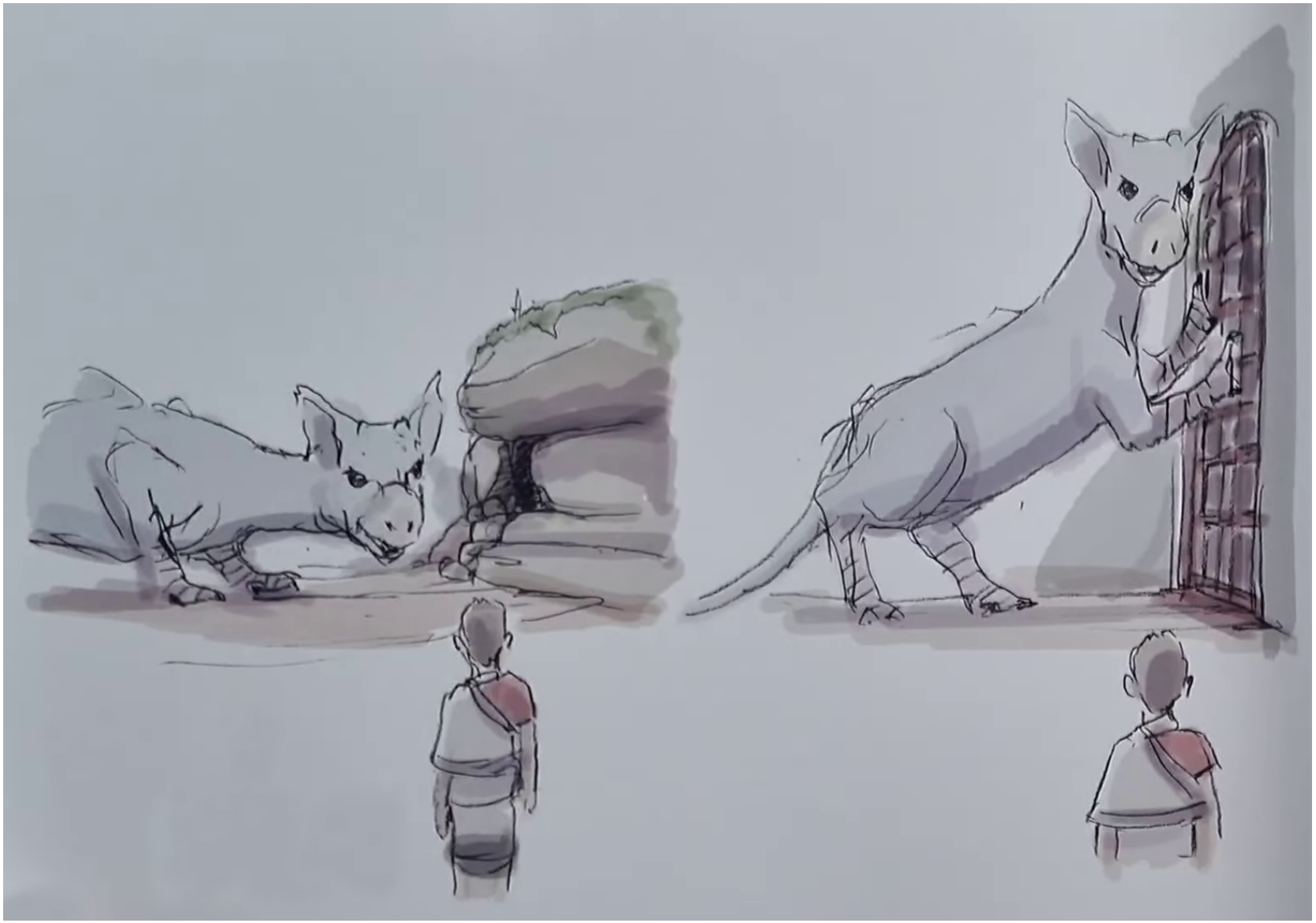
With no other way forward, the Boy must go alone into spiraling, claustrophobic corridors. The Yoroi guard this place fiercely, so there are many close scraped on the way to the top.

On the central platform of these connected cylindrical corridors—where players must flip switches to open the gates above, while running from Yoroi—we can see perhaps the most concentrated example of the glowing blue glyphs that can be found throughout the game, placed here and there to subtly illuminate the path that the player should be following (and referred to internally by the team as ‘hint floors’). The team tells us that they’re supposed to be thought of as footprints—they considered making them literal footprints, they muse—and are created to be easier to see from a distance when the Boy is riding atop Trico than when he’s standing on top of them.



We ask if the Boy can see these strange symbols too, or just the player, and we’re told that they’re part of the setting of the world, so the Boy can probably see them too—it’s both a hint in that world, and a hint to the player.

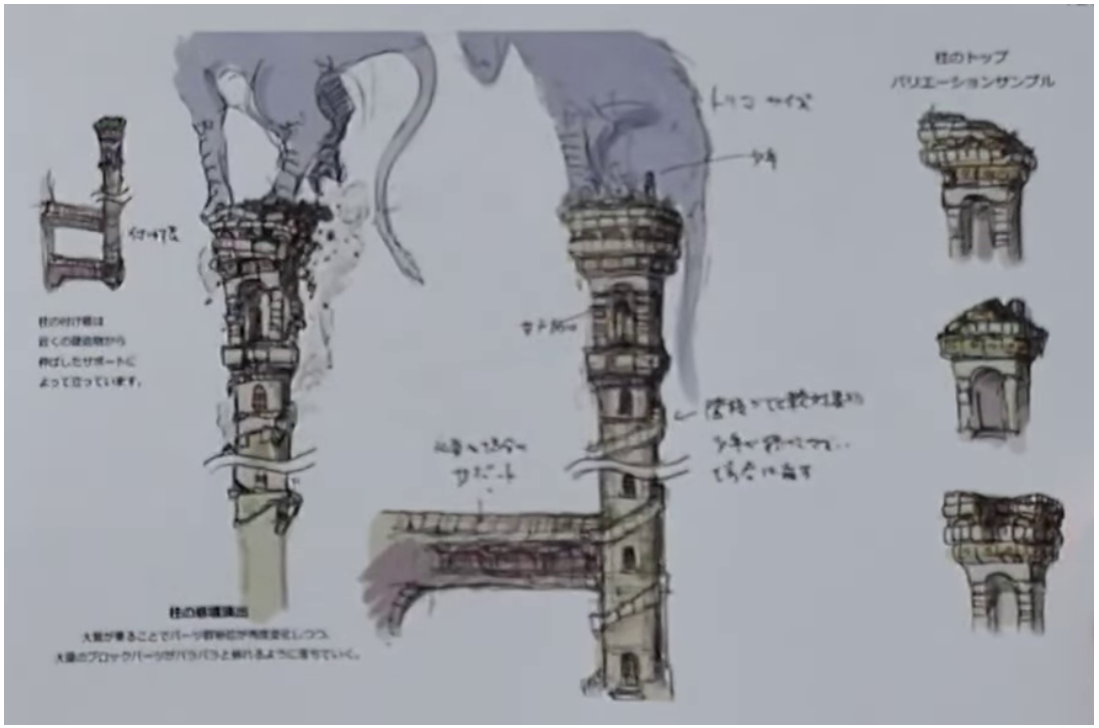
Much work was put into the mechanical devices in the game’s world. Every switch, winch and drawbridge mechanism was sketched to achieve a consistent, believable quality.



These sketches show that Trico needed to be able to perform many of its animations while turning its head to look at the Boy (even at different heights), and look natural while doing so.

There's an interesting suggested cyclical nature to the worlds that Ueda and his team create, the aforementioned footprint-like glyphs being just one example—if they actually exist in the game's universe, why are they there, and who put them there? Is this not the first boy who's attempted to escape from the Valley? We asked Ueda about these implications.

"It's a system. In *ICO* for example, there's a sense that it hasn't been just this protagonist, but others who have been brought there [e.g. the shadow creatures]. In *Shadow of the Colossus*, I'm not sure how many heroes there have been, but in my image of the world there's a sense of time having stopped. In *The Last Guardian*, probably many trico creatures have been hit by lightning and have spit up children and have been left to recover—it's not as rare a happening as you might think. But maybe, if there is this repetition, it's the player who causes the disruption, who steps in and helps Ico save Yorda, who takes down all of the Colossi."



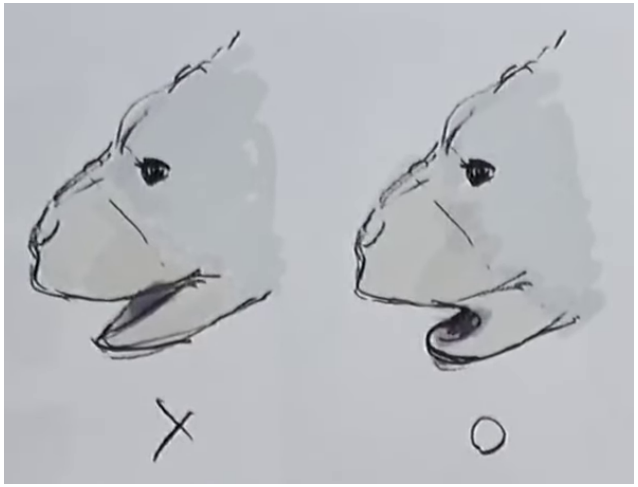
Here we see detailed notes for the architecture of this pillar, the connecting support structures, and how it will crumble when Trico alights on it (and how that will make the stairs difficult for the Boy to use).

19 | Feeding Trico

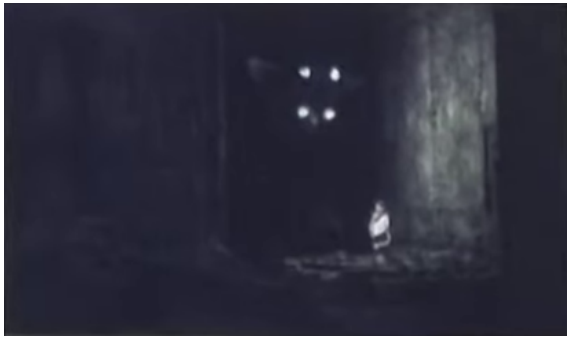
Trico is worn down and refuses to proceed, so the Boy goes in search of the one thing he knows will raise his companion's spirits—glowing green barrels.

We see statues of trico creatures throughout the journey, flanking various doors like stalwart gargoyles, decorating the tops of some building structures, or even dotting the upper rim of the crater which houses the Valley. Just as often, though, we see them fallen and broken on the ground, as is the case here. In this particular instance, the original idea was to have the player climb on top of a statue only to break it, creating a platform in the process. The team ended up changing the puzzle, but the broken statue remained, a relic of both a crumbling world and a team that was constantly nipping, tucking, and tweaking. As for the statues' relevance in the game's world? "They have no story function in particular," Tanaka tells us.

Curious about the mine carts here (and elsewhere), we asked whose job it was to create it. Suzuki answers that it was a collaboration between Ueda and himself: "The rail cart is just one example, but I'd get that as a sketch from Ueda, and then I'd work with him to realize it as an object in the game and make it as close as possible to what he was envisioning."



Trico's mouth was shaped like a beak to make it easier for the team to realize in the game. Even so, there were strict rules on what kind of animations were good or bad.



Trico helps guide the Boy through a small, dark room—where much of the floor has crumbled away—by the light of its brightly-glowing eyes. While some games would use such a simple, effective mechanic repeatedly, it's only used in this one brief section. The team tells us that it was a simple system to create, so they didn't feel the need to reuse it. The dark area was also an example of one created later in development, to help stitch other areas together.

Walking The Wires | 20

There's a small opening here that can be reached by heading down the vines as far as possible on the spiral tower. It was another spot where a barrel was considered, but it was too difficult to feed it to Trico, so it was removed.

The Boy is once again forced to perform some death-defying feats of balance, as the depths of the Valley recede into the mist below him. Trico, meanwhile, can only watch and wait…

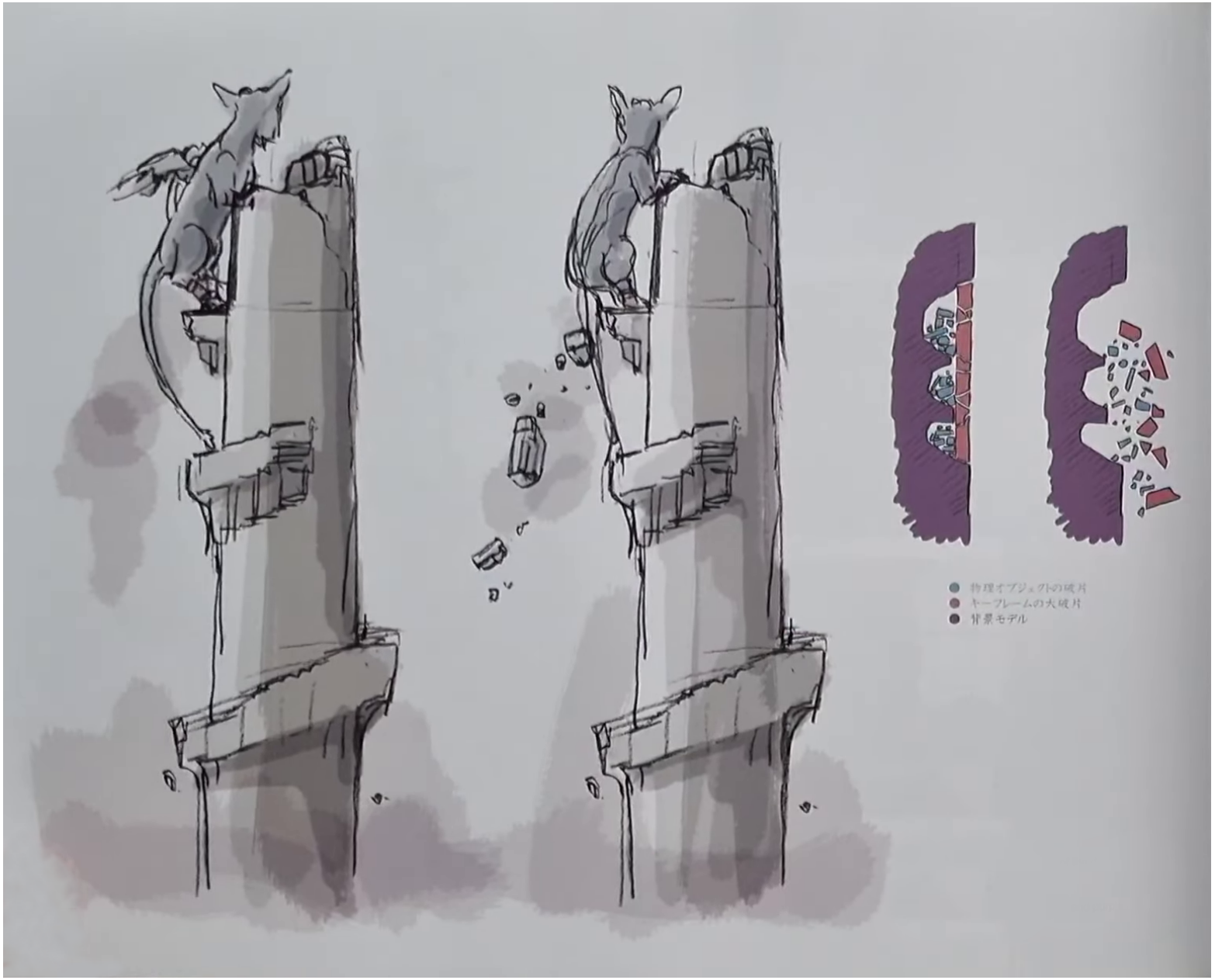
Walking the wires between the Valley's buildings makes it easy to appreciate the sheer scale of the architecture, from the towering heights to the misty, mysterious depths. And watching the wires yank free from their anchor points, and large chunks of the carious structures crumble under Trico's mass, makes it just as easy to appreciate the technical beauty of the destruction in the game—an area that Ueda was very particular about, we're told.

When asked about how they depicted scale, Ueda says that "A part of it is that, despite the gigantic creatures that appear in the game, we make the stages and levels to human scale. I was also conscious of giving a sense of scale by ensuring there was the right density of information appropriate for distant views, or through arranging objects [of different scale] to be compared." This area is a perfect example of this, as small details such as doves and the leaves of the vines contrast with architecture of almost unfathomable sizes, the detail on which increases the nearer it is to the Boy's current height. Also in service to this is the Boy's appearance—his simplistic style is at odds with the visual density of the backgrounds and lends contrast to the scenes.

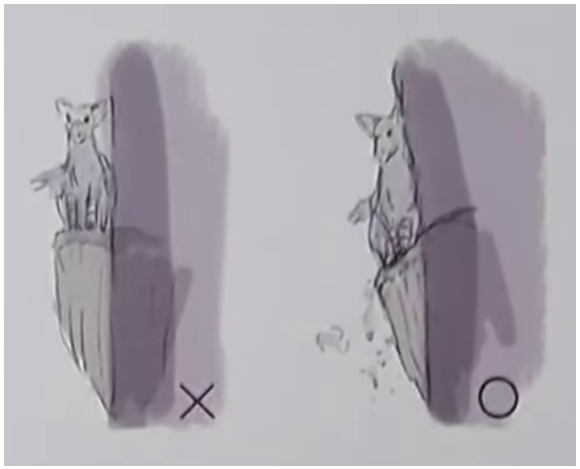
These images show how the Boy climbs on Trico's body (or vines on a curved surface). The team had to find a system that made controlling the climbing easy, even if Trico moved around quickly and changed the camera angle.

This illustration shows how the structure is designed in its already-destroyed state. The original state is suggested through faint lines, and a new, more interesting form is created by removing parts of it.

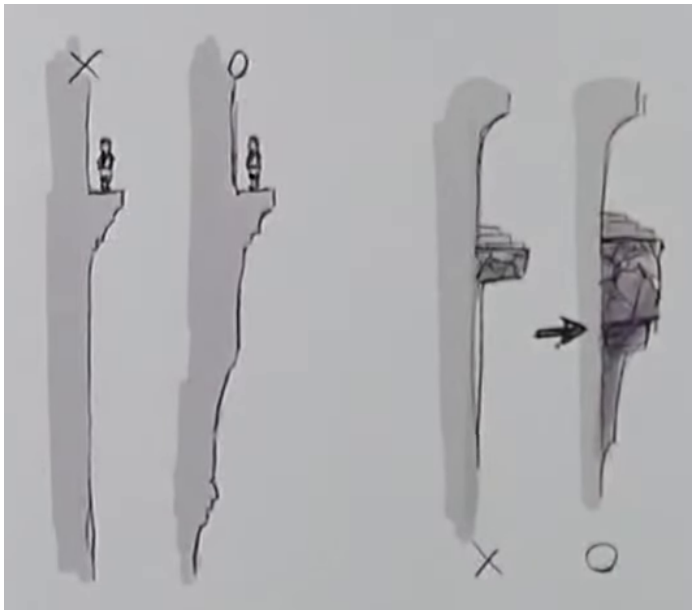
Areas like this had their elements moved and tweaked to accommodate separate paths for Trico and the Boy. The entire area is contrived to avoid letting Trico jump ahead, and the real design challenge is in preventing players from noticing that.

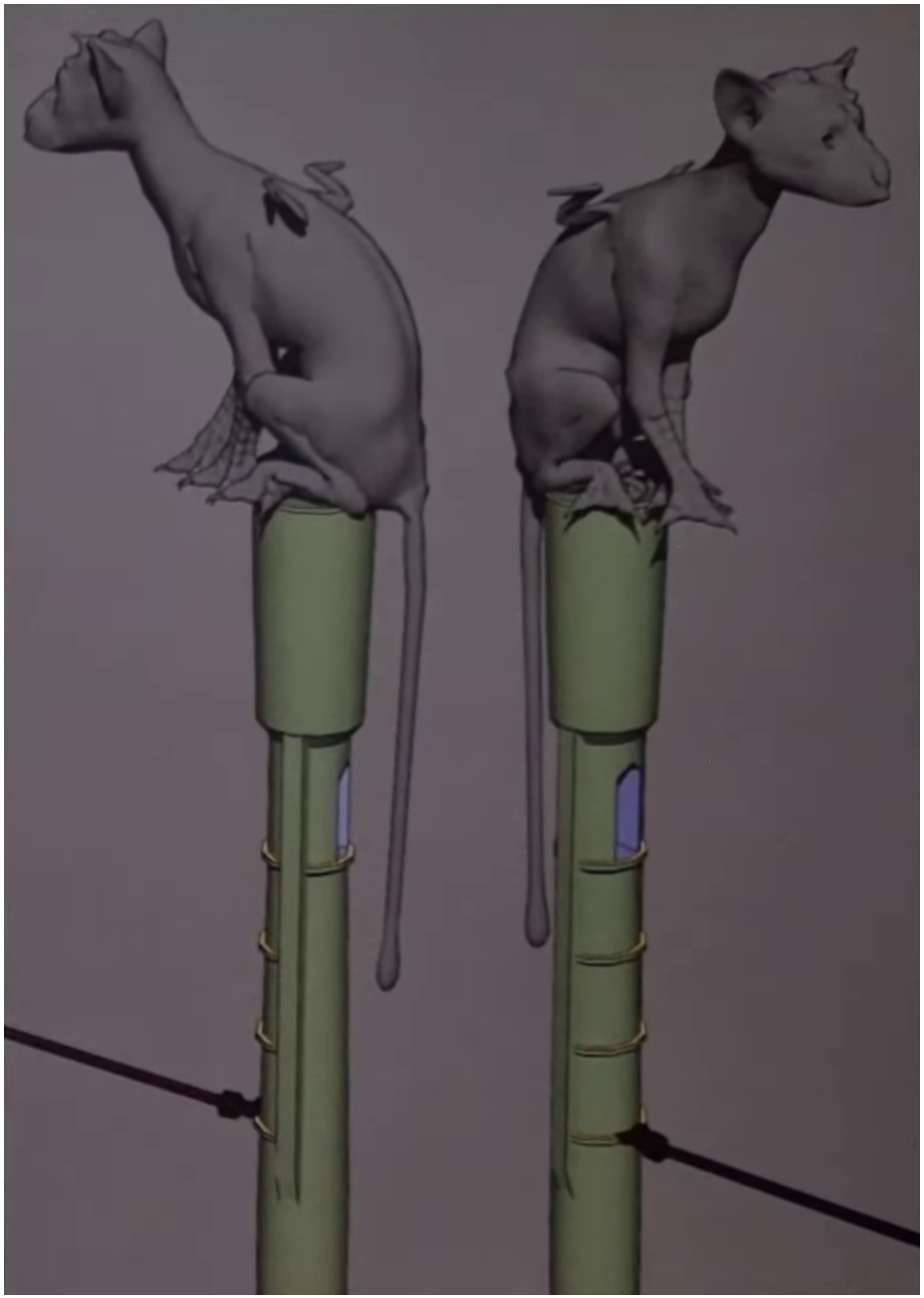


It’s interesting to see how some of the destruction in the game is color-coded. Here, the blue highlights “broken fragments of physics objects,” while pink is “larger broken fragments of key frames,” and purple is the “background model.”



It’s easy to imagine that Ueda made many of the sketches shown in this book, but a little more surprising to learn that he also created many of the test renders as well. This model, for example, used for animation tests and posing, was created by Ueda himself.



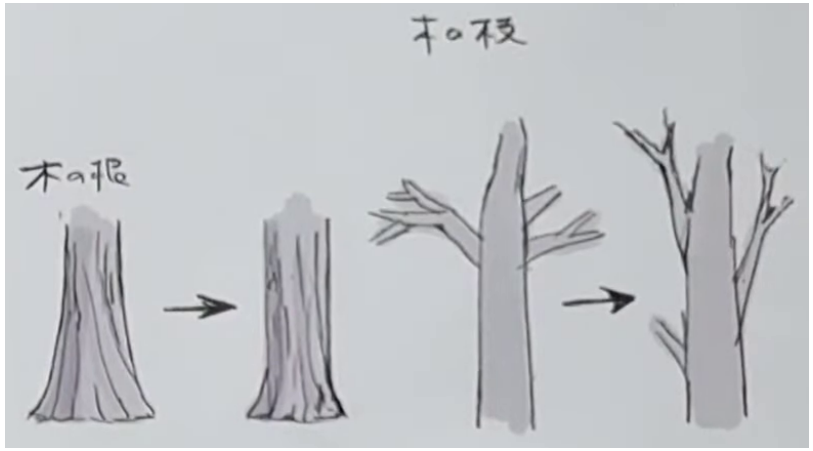


After The Fall | 21

The Boy awakes hanging by his clothes in a tree, dangling above a familiar area. He struggles, but is completely stuck and must waste no time getting Trico's attention.

After Trico is thrown off a cliffside by the first real encounter with another trico creature—crashing through a massive doomed structure during the fall—the Boy awakes in a tree, seemingly no worse for wear. Once freed, and with some careful footing, the Boy can make his way around the corner of the room and climb up into a mysterious optional passage—albeit one that turns out to be a dead end, despite its fully-developed facade. Ueda's sparse narratives and unexplained worlds make it easy to look for meaning in every detail, but Occam's razor presides here too; the simplest explanation is usually the correct one. Here, this dead end once contained one of the game's 48 collectible hidden barrels, but was removed somewhere along the way. The barrels were placed towards the end of the project by both genDESIGN and JAPAN Studio, as a means of rewarding players for exploring and to extend the length of the game.

When asked if he wanted to add more hidden areas to the game, Ueda replied that: "We had hoped to add a little more, but this was never meant to be the type of game that appeals to 'play value,' so we eventually gave up because of time limitations."



As with everything else in the game, the way trees look was important to the team. They had to have an exacting, natural appearance, especially in scenes like this one where they play a key role.

There’s no quick way to free the Boy here, the team tell us. You can call to Trico and the use the left stick when its tail gets close enough, but there’s no trick to get Trico into position any faster.

This building is beautifully designed—it's hardly surprising that the team chose to revisit it in the game, this tie by falling through the ceiling. The first time the player is here they're unlikely to notice the way the tree near the top is entwined into the building structure.

22 | To Protect The Boy

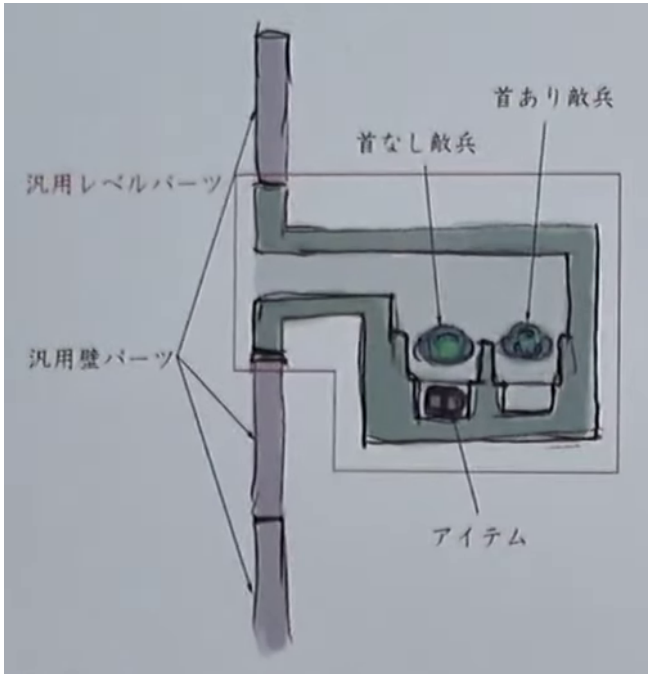
The Boy must once again venture alone into an unfamiliar room guarded by Yoroi, who hold up shields bearing the eye symbol to keep the distant Trico frozen in place.

It's not entirely clear what makes Trico overcome its fear of the glass eyes here when the Boy is in real danger. For some players, Trico ignores the shield held by a Yoroi and comes crashing over to rescue the Boy. This can be an amazing moment—in breaking the rules that have been established, the power of Trico's attachment to the Boy is affirmed. Some players don't get to experience this moment, however; Trico just as often refuses to move from its perch, or the player simply pushed both shield-wielders over without any trouble.

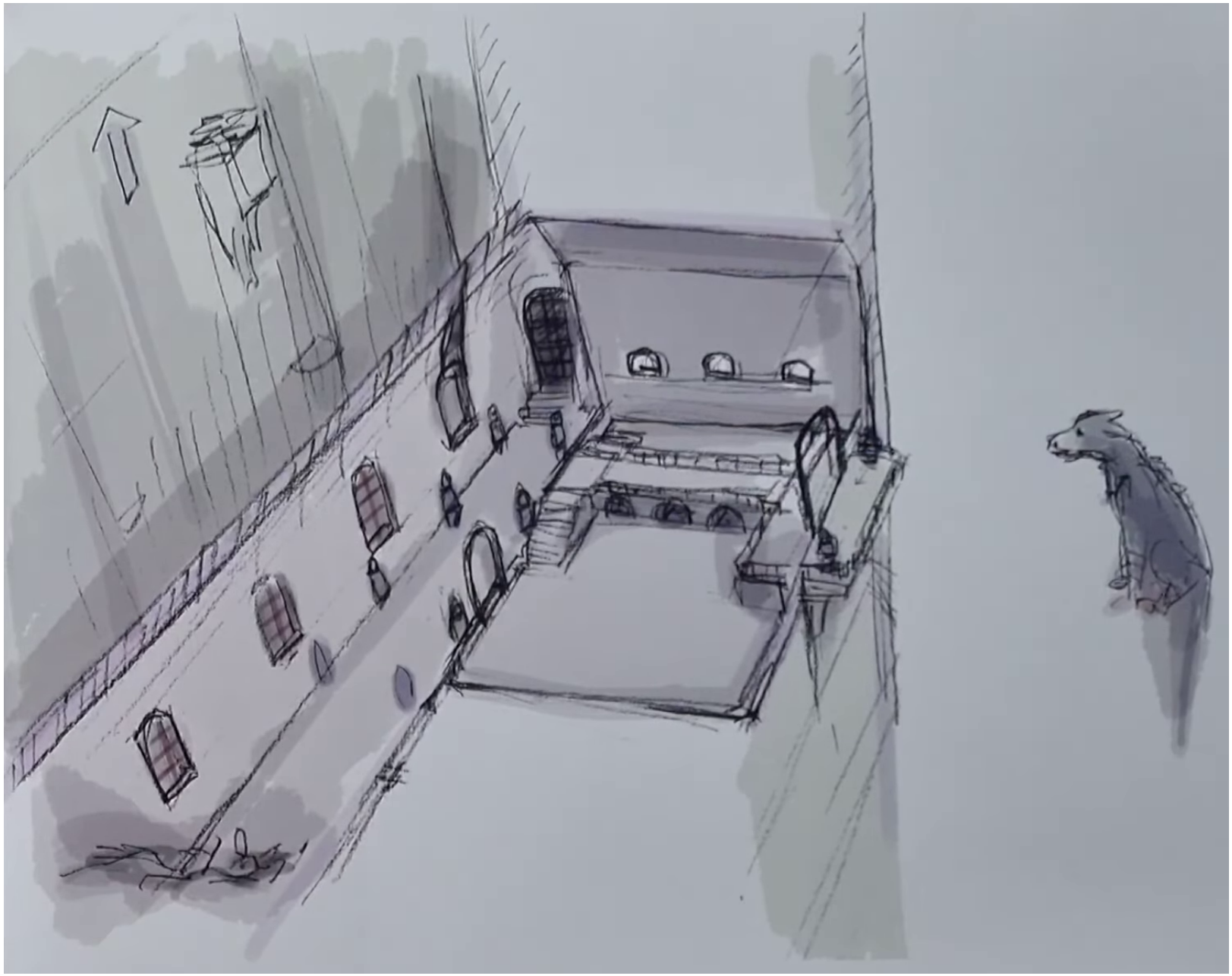
This is another area where we notice something very much like a bird's nest positioned up high on top of a pillar. Do the nests we see in the game have a practical purpose, we ask? And was there any thought given to the idea of tricos being able to lay eggs? Ueda's response is straightforward: "Tricos contain some elements of birds inside of them. We put in these nest-like objects because nest-building is a habit of all birds, still remaining in tricos."

Nests can be seen in this area, in the very first canyon (below and to the left of the windmill), and on the top of the first birdcage-shaped antenna room. The text on the image to the left reads: "A thing like a trico's nest (countless pieces of wood have been shaped into a pincushion, entwined with rope and other waste material)."

This is another scene with multiple paths to success; it offers players the choice to either use the small tunnels to evade the Yoroi, or run straight past them and up the stairs towards the shield-wielders that keep Trico at bay. While the puzzles largely didn't change over the course of development, multiple solutions to many of them emerged during play-testing. As Suzuki told us, "We created the puzzles and gimmicks with only one solution or use in mind, but then through the process of watching players play we'd see different approaches, and when we liked them Ueda would say that we should support those as well."



This area introduces the idea of hiding a barrel behind a stationed Yoroi—something used again later on to great effect with the single stationed Yoroi above the 'arena' area.

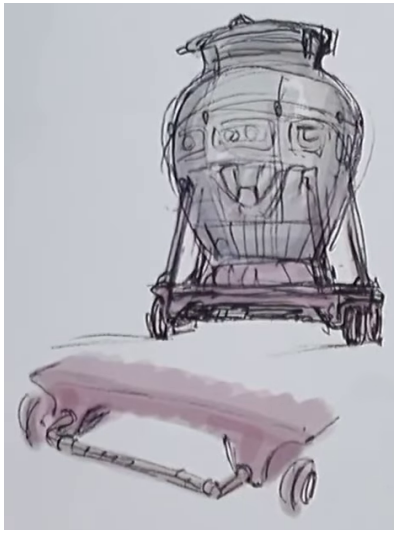


23 | Transfixed Again

Deep in the Valley's interior, another huge pot blocks the pair's progress. While Trico scratches at the pot, the Boy scrambles to move the enormous obstacle and recapture his companion's attention.

While it's easy to complain about some of the control and camera eccentricities found in certain spots in the game (like when Trico's tail sometimes takes a while to slip down to the lower level in this cave…), it's just as easy to take for granted the enormity of the technical accomplishment that is Trico. Especially when we've spoken with other game developers, they are universally stunned at the beauty, consistency, and believability of Trico's animation, AI, and overall execution. As one example, you will rarely if ever see the creature's body 'clip' through the environment (when collisions aren't detected and two objects briefly exist in the same space), an expected staple of games with large, complex objects moving next to one another. That's something that could ruin the believability of a scene such as this, which relies on a part of Trico's body to move convincingly through a hole in the environment.

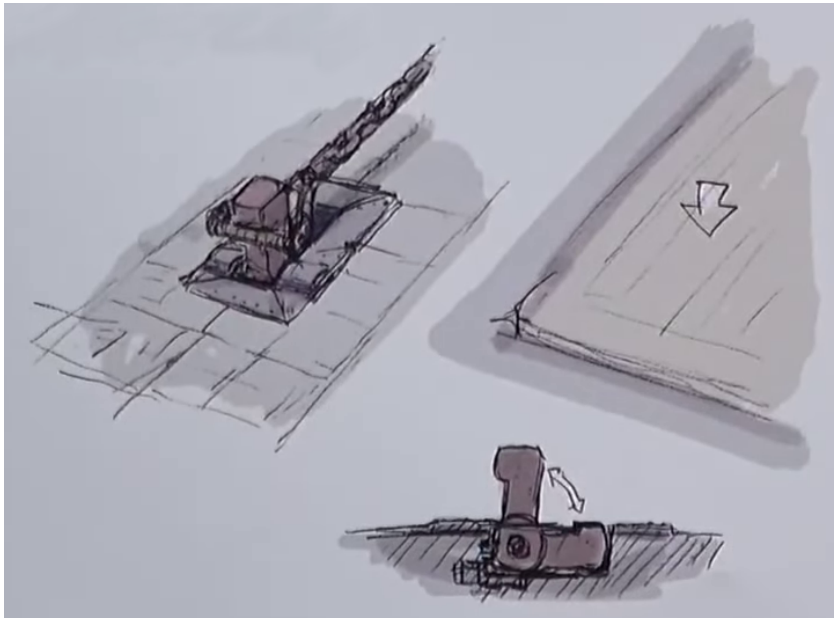
The beams above the water-filled room that the Boy falls into (known internally as 'the pit') had to be spaced very accurately so that Trico's head couldn't fit through.



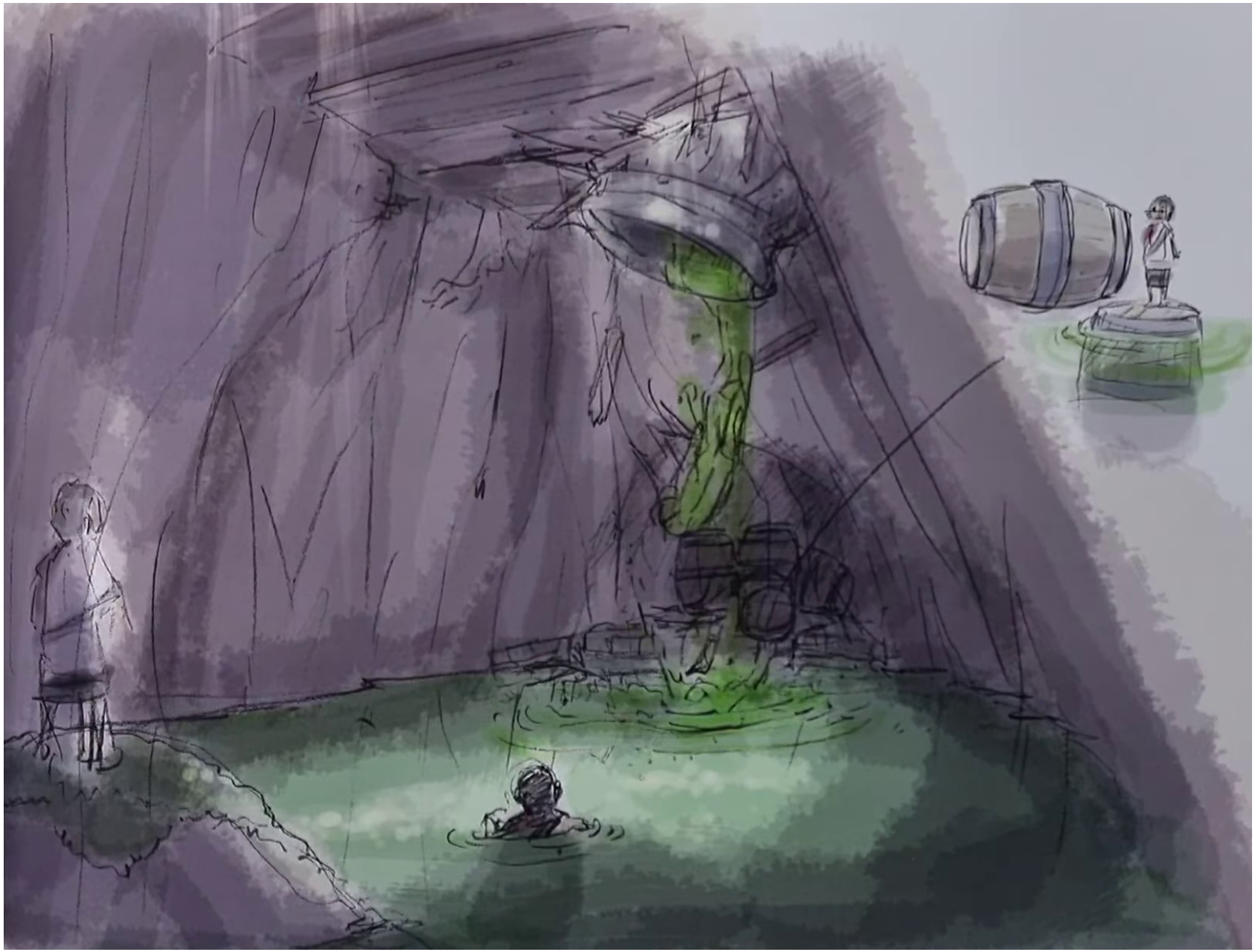
An object like this pot (which is used more than once in the game), would take about a day to sketch and design, and then another week to 3D model.

Beyond the visual consistency and believability of the game's world, Ueda wanted to make sure that players had a smooth experience throughout, especially as they were targeting a wider audience than previous games. Many players had found *Shadow of the Colossus* too difficult to complete, so the team strove to make *The Last Guardian* more accessible. To that end, Ueda attended every playtest of the game—while he had a clear vision for the experience, if a player got stuck or didn't understand something, that would always take precedence. It was never a battle between what he wanted and what the player wanted, it was about what the player needed at the time, and changing things to meet them half way.

The control prompts that appear at the top right of the screen (and which experienced gamers can find a little intrusive) are another concession to accessibility, there to ensure that anyone willing to try the game will at least know which button to press to trigger which action.



Since being stuck for too long in the cavern is not much fun, the player is given a few different hints by the narrator in this area. Many players do get stuck here, however—climbing Trico's tail is not often necessary to progress, so getting the tail to drop down isn't the type of solution they're looking for.



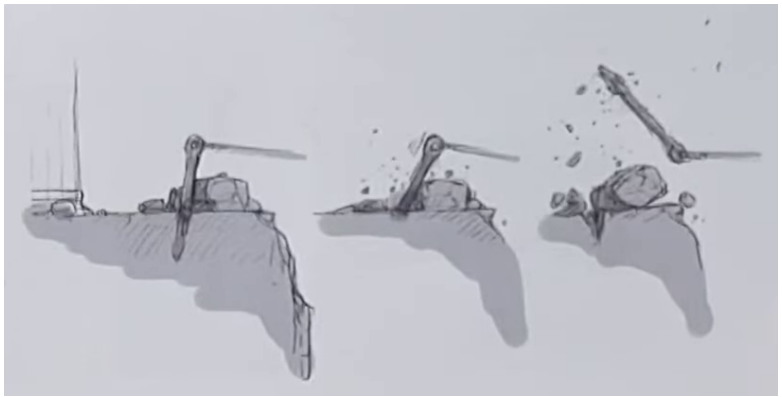
Images like this one show the immense size of the interiors in this part of the game, despite them being designed at human scale for the Yoroi to function within. This particular image also demonstrates the thoughtful nature of the environment design—the collapsed support pillar has become a platform for Trico.

A Collapsing Corridor | 24

The series of caverns eventually lead back out to a huge room with double balconies and a locked door, sunlight beaming in through its small archways. The Boy goes on ahead, but is quickly chased back by the Yoroi.

As in *ICO* and *Shadow of the Colossus* before it, *The Last Guardian*'s soundscape is inseparable from the experience, from the delicate, soaring score to the Boy's frantic shouts after Trico.

The soundtrack was created by Japanese-American composer Takeshi Furukawa, in collaboration with the London Symphony Orchestra, the Trinity Boys Choir, and the London Voices. According to the team, they reached out to Furukawa at the end of 2009 with the aim of having him help them to find a composer, which turned into them asking him to do the music himself. He created a demo to help sketch out music that captured the world of the game, and the music came together around the same time that they had a complete picture of the experience, in early 2014. Over the course of working together, the team would listen to music sent by Furukawa without any visuals, and decide which part of the game it might be appropriate for, while sending him storyboards—especially for the cutscenes—which he would write music specifically for. The orchestral recordings were happening while the songs were still being composed, and were finished at the end of March 2016.

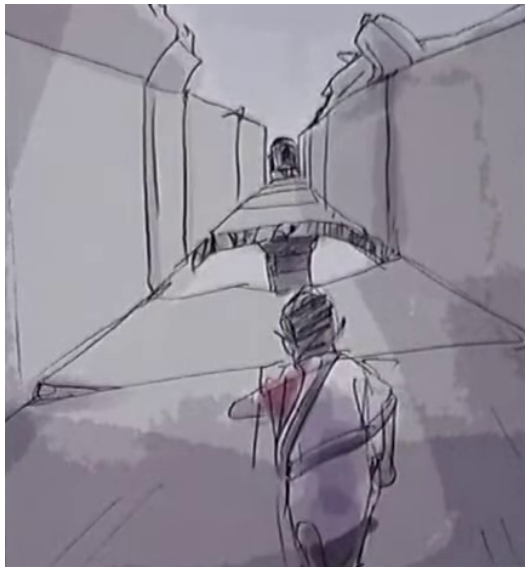


This is another scene in which the environmental destruction takes center stage, with every last piece of rubble reacting convincingly.

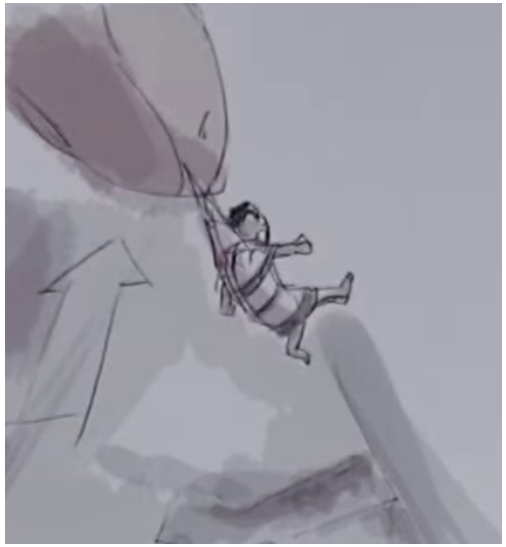
The Boy's voice was changed from much earlier recordings, because the original actor had grown older. After finding a new Boy—from a pool of about 20 candidates who auditioned—things went smoothly and the team says they got exactly what they wanted.

In trying to decode the language spoken by the Boy and other villagers during the game, some fans have incorrectly placed its roots in Turkish. The language in the game is mostly based in Japanese (which does share some linguistic similarities with Turkish), though Tanji worked with Ueda to change it enough to make it distinct and lend it an original tone. While it was possible for *ICO*'s language to be fully transcribed once its basic rules were solved, Tanji tells us that this isn't as easily done in *The Last Guardian*: "Compared to *ICO* it's more like a halfway point. There are some rules and some grammar, but it's not a fully formed language." He admits that there's some logic to how the language in *ICO* was created, but won't tell us more than that.

This building went through many changes to its exterior as well as its interior. The arches were originally much bigger and the corridor didn't have its curved ceiling.



This storyboard describes the final dash across the crumbling corridor. As the Yoroi fall to the depths below, the Boy runs and jumps until the structure collapses and Trico grabs him at the last moment. The outcome is a surprise because the camera’s position doesn’t allow the player to see Trico running along the roof of the corridor.



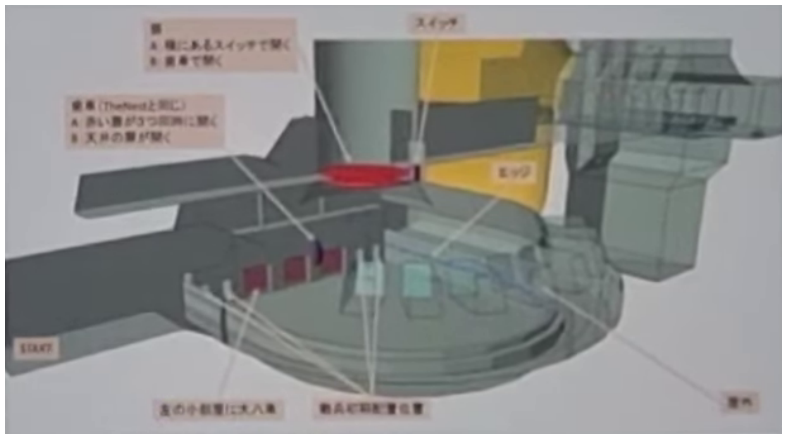
The Arena | 25

Light hands in the air upon entering this large, circular arena, in which the pair face a group of armed Yoroi, including another with an eye shield. The Boy must be quick on his feet to avoid being captured here.

The arena fight is the pair's largest up to this point, and makes it tough to avoid the Boy being carried by the Yoroi at least a few steps towards the enigmatic, foreboding blue door at the side of the huge room. If you've been carried into their blinding white light (or run into one at the same moment Yoroi are emerging), you'll know that the Boy's journey ends there. But what are they, and where do they lead?

The team say that the blue doors are like portals, bridging the gap between two places. In this case, all of the blue doors throughout the game lead to a single place—the room that houses the Core, which the Boy eventually journeys to near the game's end. In fact, we're told that if you look closely enough through the doors when they open, you can catch a glimpse of the Core, as a circular form looming beyond the threshold.

If the Boy happens to find an intact glass eye shield after a fight, he can actually pick it up and use it to entrance Trico, just as a Yoroi would. It can be used in this way to push Trico back, but there's no real purpose for it beyond a fun mechanical consistency. (The Boy also had the ability to pick up the Yoroi's spears off of the ground and carry them, but it was removed late in development.)

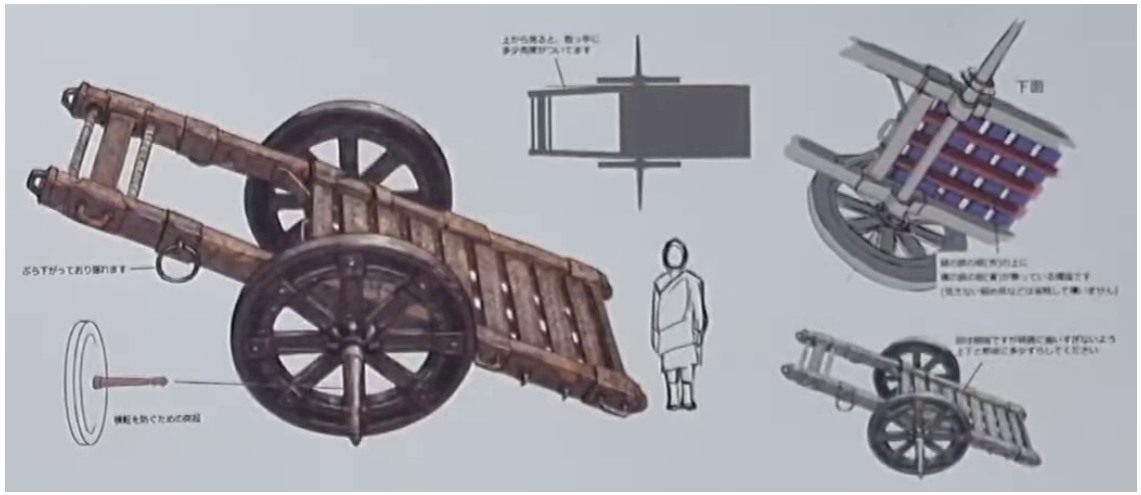


This level design render labels all of the key features of the area. The gear that opens the three gates has a label that says "Same as the one in The Nest." referring to the upcoming scene in which the Boy encounters the other, darker trico as it sleeps.

There are few clues as to what this arena-like area was designed for, though the grating and its proximity to the water-filled areas to come suggest it may have acted as a kind of drainage area.

On the technology side, all of the tech that JAPAN Studio created for *The Last Guardian* was specifically developed for the game, though moving forward some of it may end up being used in other internally-developed projects. We inquire further into the background of the JAPAN Studio side of the team, and how it fits into the larger makeup of their studio. When the game began development on PlayStation®3 the team was a mere 10 people, ebbing and flowing throughout development, with a core team of around 20—before ballooning up to its height of around 90 people (including testers) towards the end (and another 10 or so if you include genDESIGN).

As for the genDESIGN team, knowing that Ueda (before *ICO*) originally hired people with little games industry background, we ask if the team members still feel like outsiders. “A hard question to answer,” Tanaka admits. “After *Shadow of the Colossus* and *ICO* there were a lot of fans of Ueda’s games, and they would join the studio and clearly understood the feeling and the nuance of Ueda’s world. One of the benefits is that they didn’t need to have everything explained to them. Also, those that came from a more traditional game development background would often have their work on level design rejected or cut because it felt too much like a traditional videogame.”

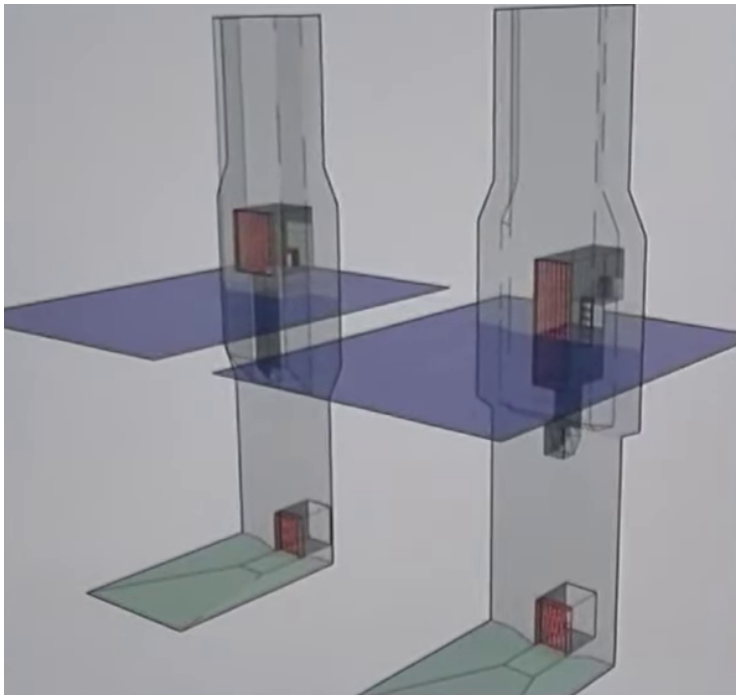


Here we see detailed instructions on the creation of the ‘daihachiguruma’—a cart for transporting goods—and a note to not make it too pretty, but rather to add some variations in the placements of its beams.

26 | A Short Swim

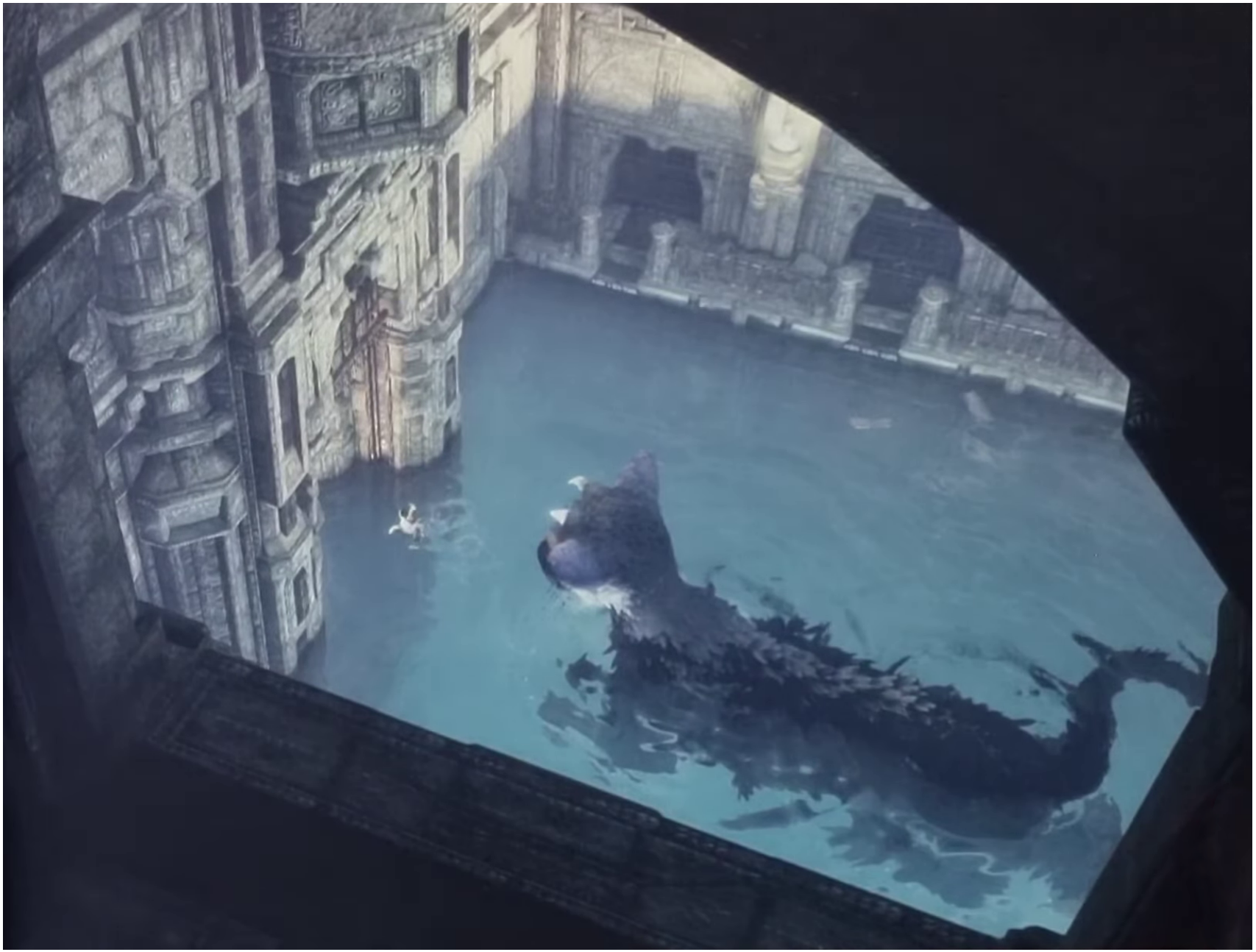
An expansive cavern filled with a man-made (or Yoroi-made?) pool of water greets the pair. There's no apparent way forward other than to dive in…

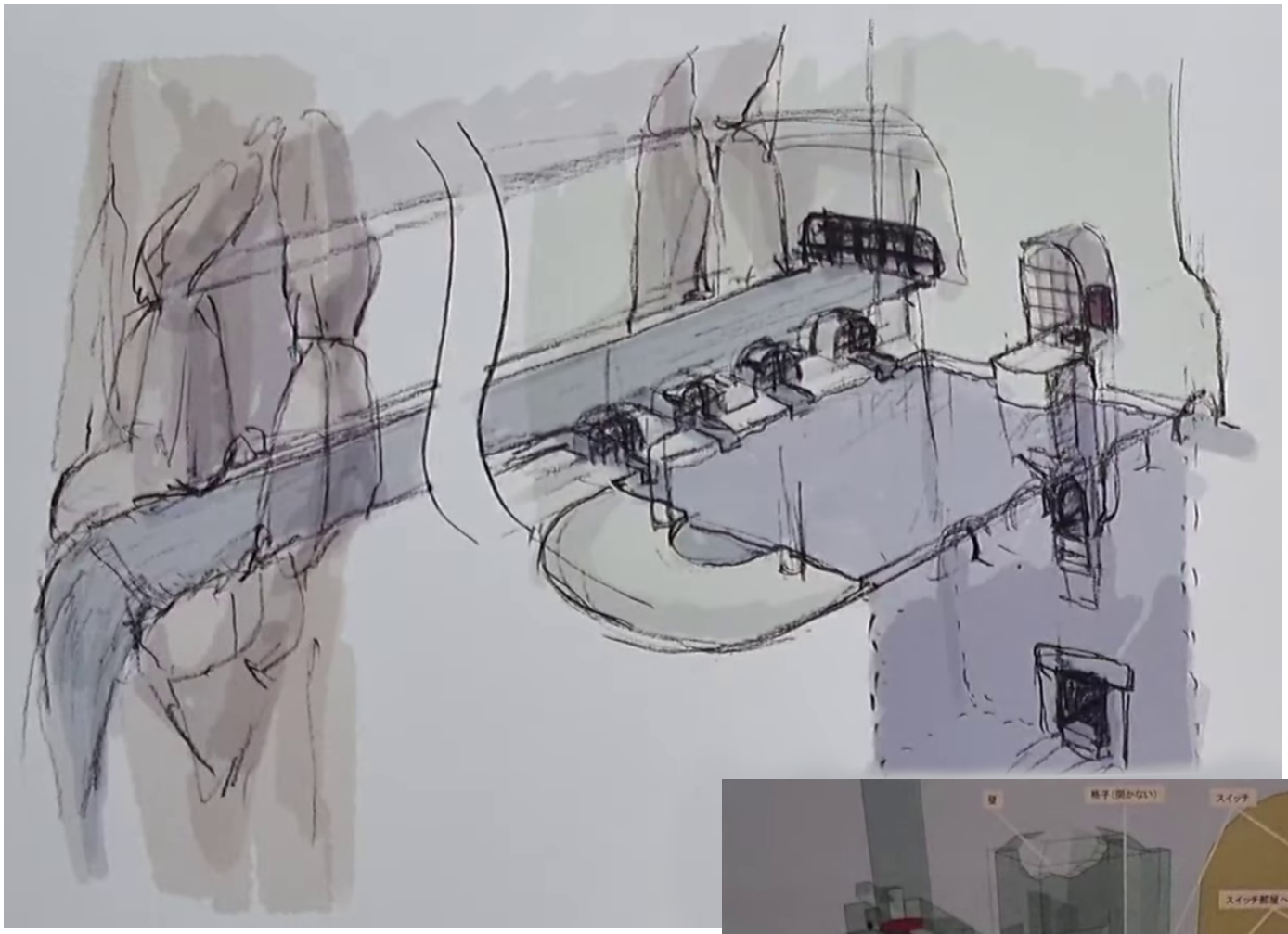
The scene where Trico must swim through a large underwater gate has been around since the earliest trailers and images of the game were released. In the final game, Trico only swims twice, both times in this one area. We asked if there were ever more instances of Trico swimming? "We originally only planned to use swimming sequences in the beginning of the game, because it seemed unnatural to have water in a level structure where you're proceeding from the bottom and going up higher and higher," Ueda tells us. "However, we decided to give priority to [including] variation in the levels, even after the middle of the game."

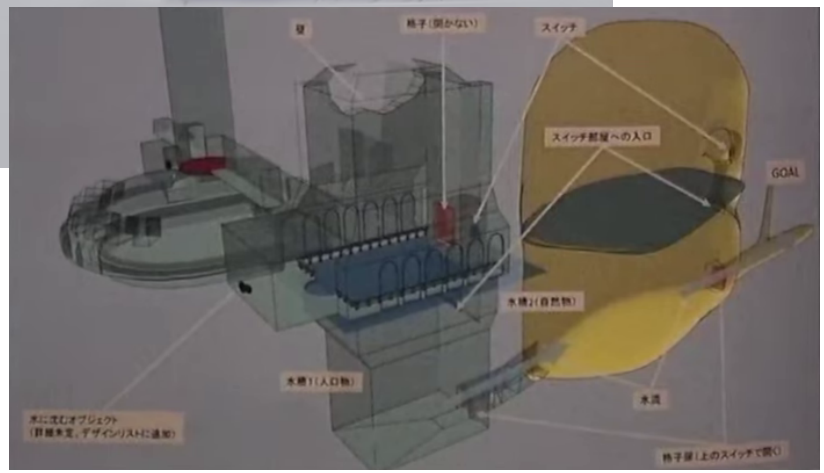


Was it hard to animate Trico swimming?, we ask. Ueda responds that "The swimming scene was relatively easy for us to procedurally animate, as it is not necessary to have Trico's feet on the ground."

This test render shows an old design alongside the new design, with some suggested changes. These changes allow the 'Trico dives into the water' puzzle to occur, simply by removing the ladder in the second pool room.

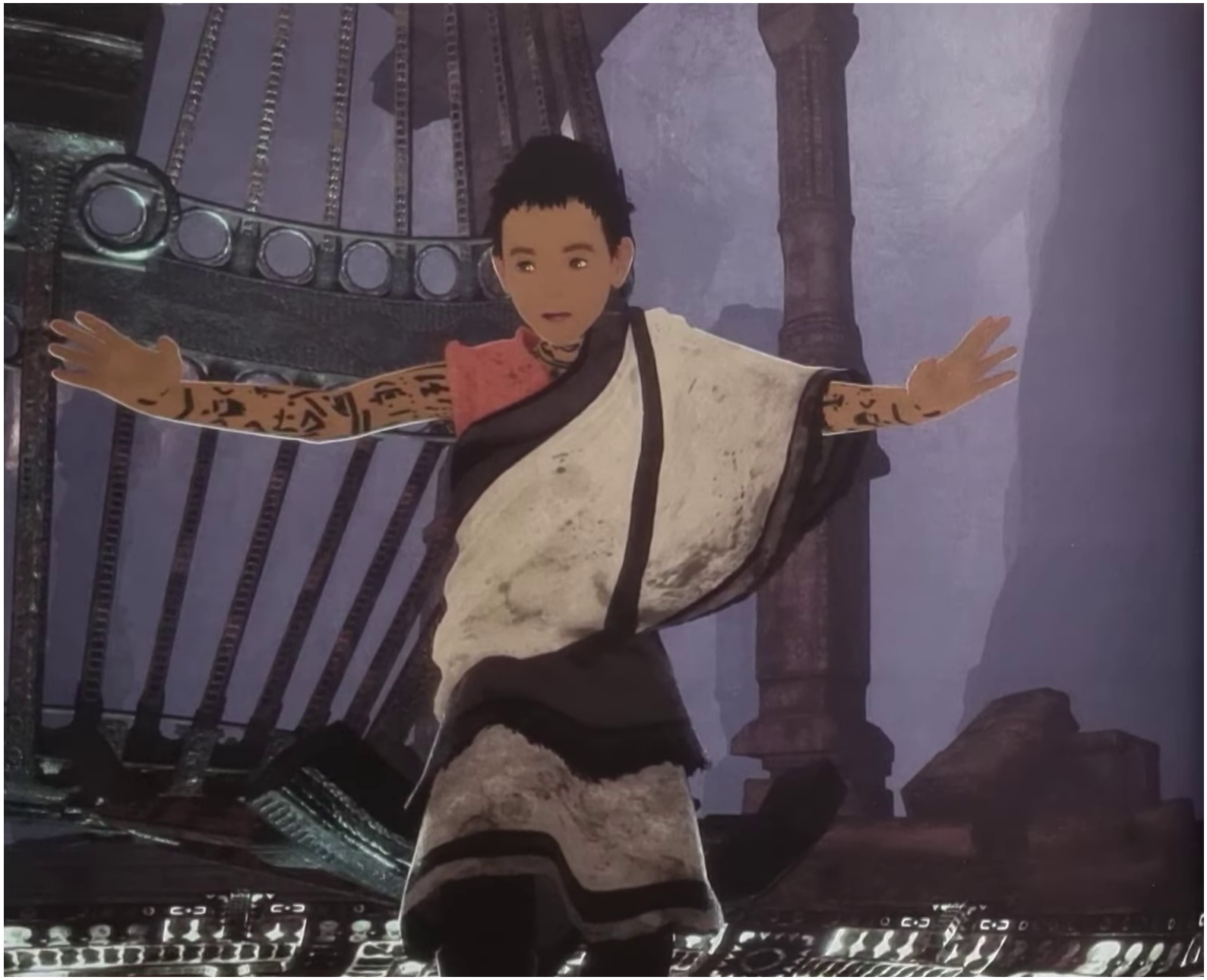






This sketch and the render here show the way that the area design mixes naturally-formed features with unnatural ones. The cavern here appears to be a natural occurrence, and the render notes which parts are natural and which are man-made. A version of the above sketch with notations describes how the unnatural pool draws in water from the stream, via the four small, gated channels.

This illustration seems to suggest that the area once featured high-hanging perches from which Trico (or, presumably, the Boy) could dive into the water below.



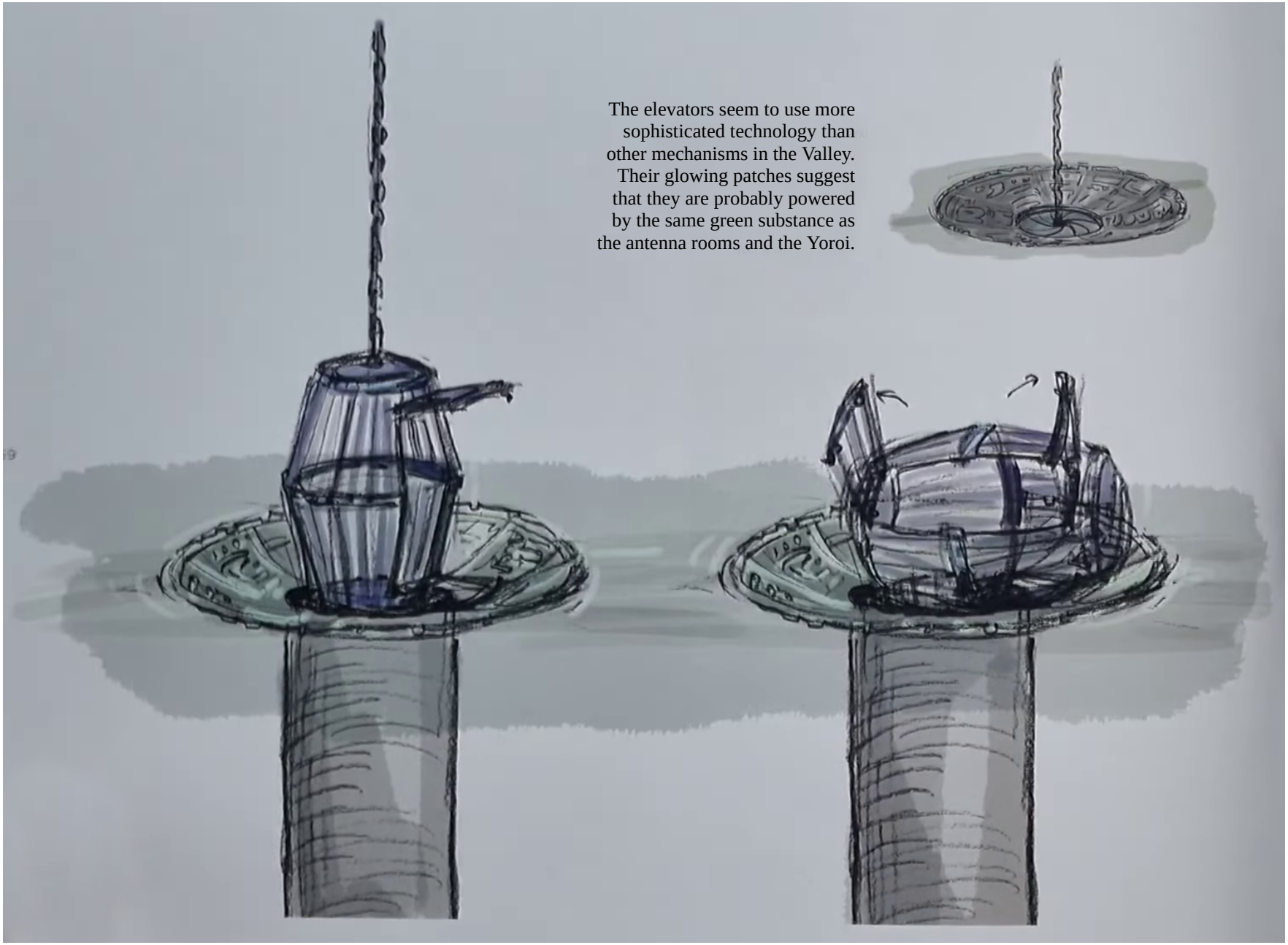
A Mysterious Elevator | 27

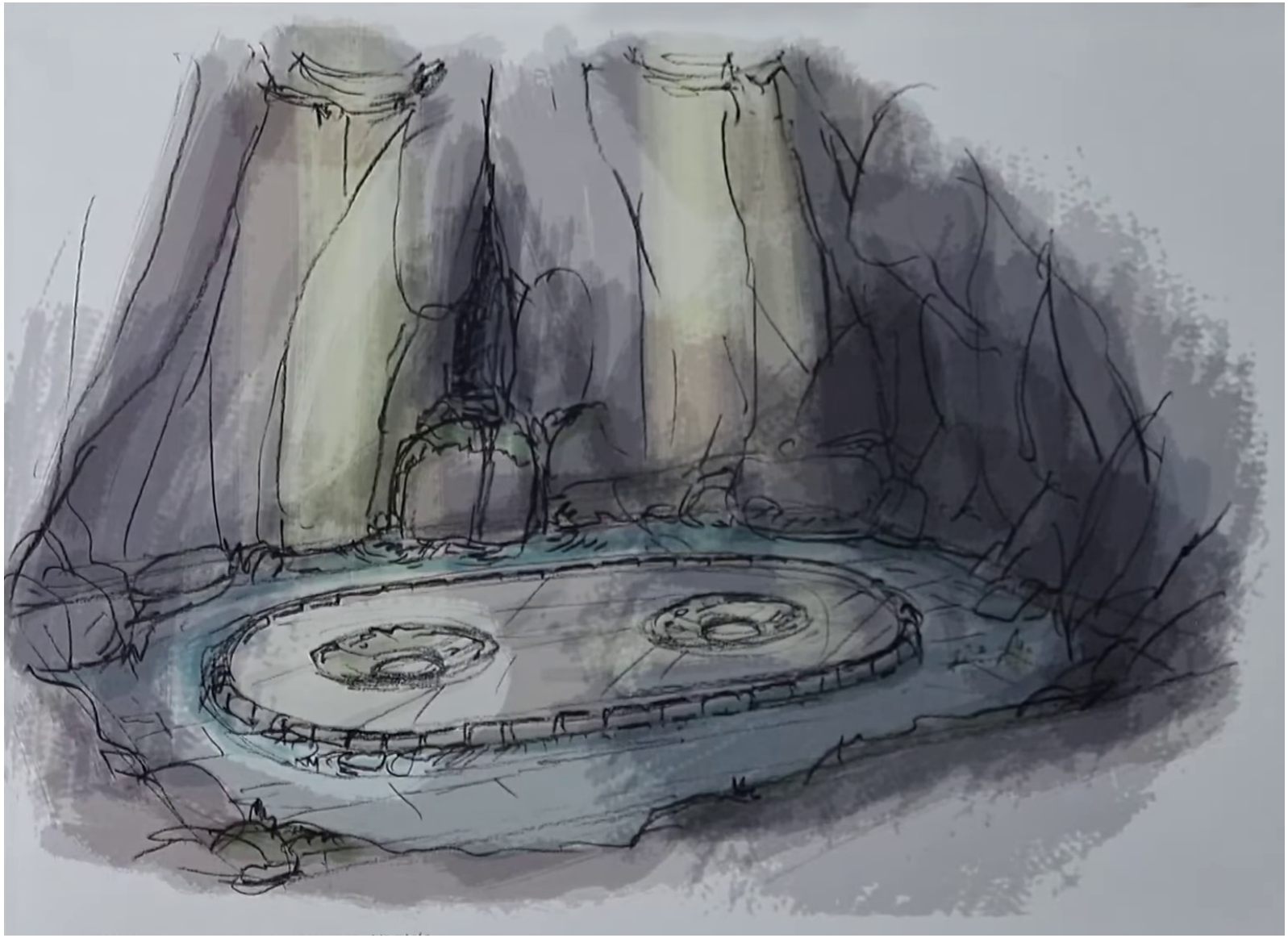
The elevator pods and their cage-like transportation units are another mystery that the Boy doesn't seem to register; they are just another way forward for him and his companion.

The Boy must go on alone in this section of the game, and there are many close-up camera angles as he's confined in the elevator cage. Sakai joined the team fairly late in development and helped Ueda to improve the game's visuals. "Before joining genDESIGN I worked at Konami on the *Pro Evolution Soccer* series, so I was familiar with trying to create very realistic graphics," he says. "When I saw that genDESIGN was recruiting in 2015, I applied." The Boy's visual style is slightly cartoony or impressionistic when compared to the rest of the game, and Sakai didn't feel that the quality of this style was quite where it needed to be in the E3 2015 demo. He addressed this by adding a lot more complexity to the character by increasing his polygon count four-fold and changing how the lighting affects his silhouette.

Trico's appearance also changed after the showing at E3 2015. Sakai says that "The way light hits Trico's body was given a lot of attention, adding proper specular and back-lighting to increase the overall level of visual quality."

The small pool that the Boy emerges in after swimming with Trico is one of the few complete breaks in environmental progression—there's no way back and no way to know how far Trico swam before losing the Boy or what happened after that.


The elevators seem to use more sophisticated technology than other mechanisms in the Valley. Their glowing patches suggest that they are probably powered by the same green substance as the antenna rooms and the Yoroi.



The elevator docking area in this sketch looks very reminiscent of a PlayStation®Move charging station. Coincidence, unconscious inspiration, or conscious choice to fit in with the theme of technology that runs through the game?

28 | In The Nest

After carefully making his way across a fallen tree trunk, the Boy begins to realize the danger he’s in. With an angered beast before him and the cliff edge at his back, the only way to go is up.

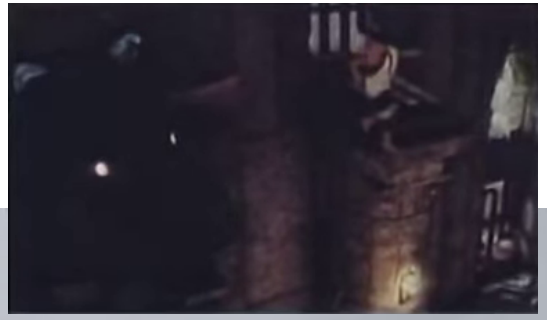
Just when both the Boy and the player think that they’re reuniting with Trico—after the brilliant misdirection of watching feathers fall and climbing what appears to be Trico’s tail—the terrifying truth is revealed: you’ve stumbled into the lair of another trico, and worse, it’s the one that violently threw Trico off the cliffside. This other, darker trico isn’t officially named, but a reminder that ‘trico’ is also the name for the species, or rather: ‘ōwashi’ (great eagle). It’s possible that ‘trico’ is the native language word for the Japanese ‘ōwashi.’

As mentioned earlier, we know that this other trico is the opposite gender from the main Trico. The team point out to us that it lacks fully developed wings and is unable to fly, and therefore unable to hunt with the rest of the tricos (which also begs the question of where it’s called away to when it eventually leaves, if not to hunt).

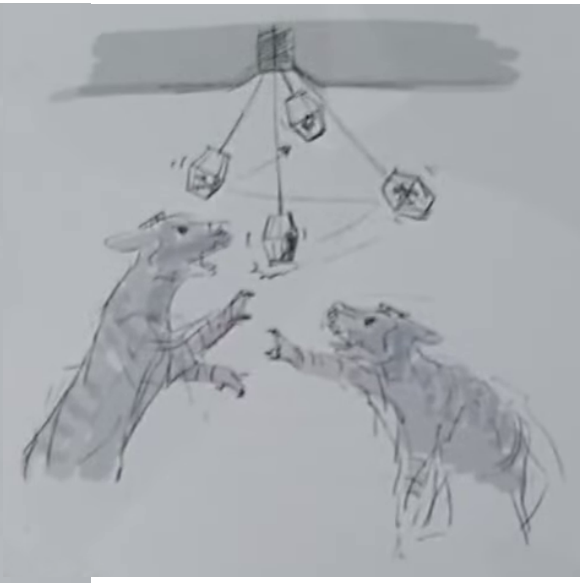
The approach and reveal of the darker trico in its lair is one of the most memorable parts of the game. Its tail hangs down through the planks (to ensure it can’t be climbed all the way up).

The holes here that the other trico looks through when chasing the Boy can’t be used by Trico, and don’t count towards the related ‘Collar’ Trophy.

This brilliant sequence was designed entirely from the sketches shown here. The player’s options at every step of the way are made clear without reducing the sense of danger that is key to the scene.



As in most parts of the game, the size of the elements in this scene are of great importance. The Boy is made to feel like a mouse escaping a cat, despite the structures in the area being at human scale.

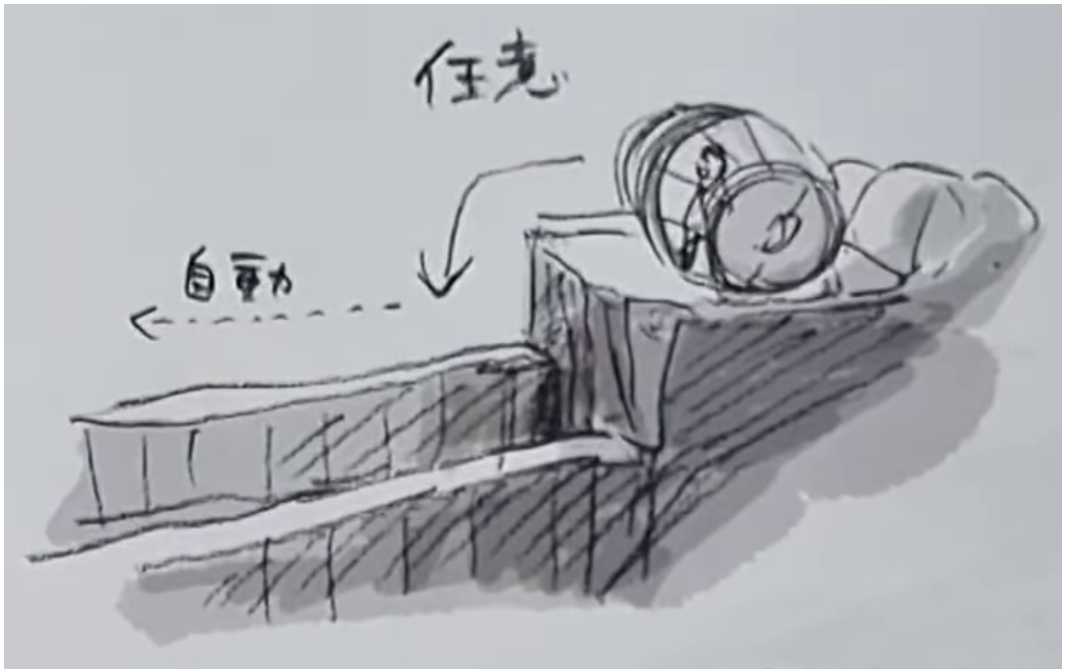


The way this scene is framed in the sketches makes it seem like, rather than being used as transport for the Yoroi, the elevators may have been there to lower ‘food’ down to the waiting tricos.

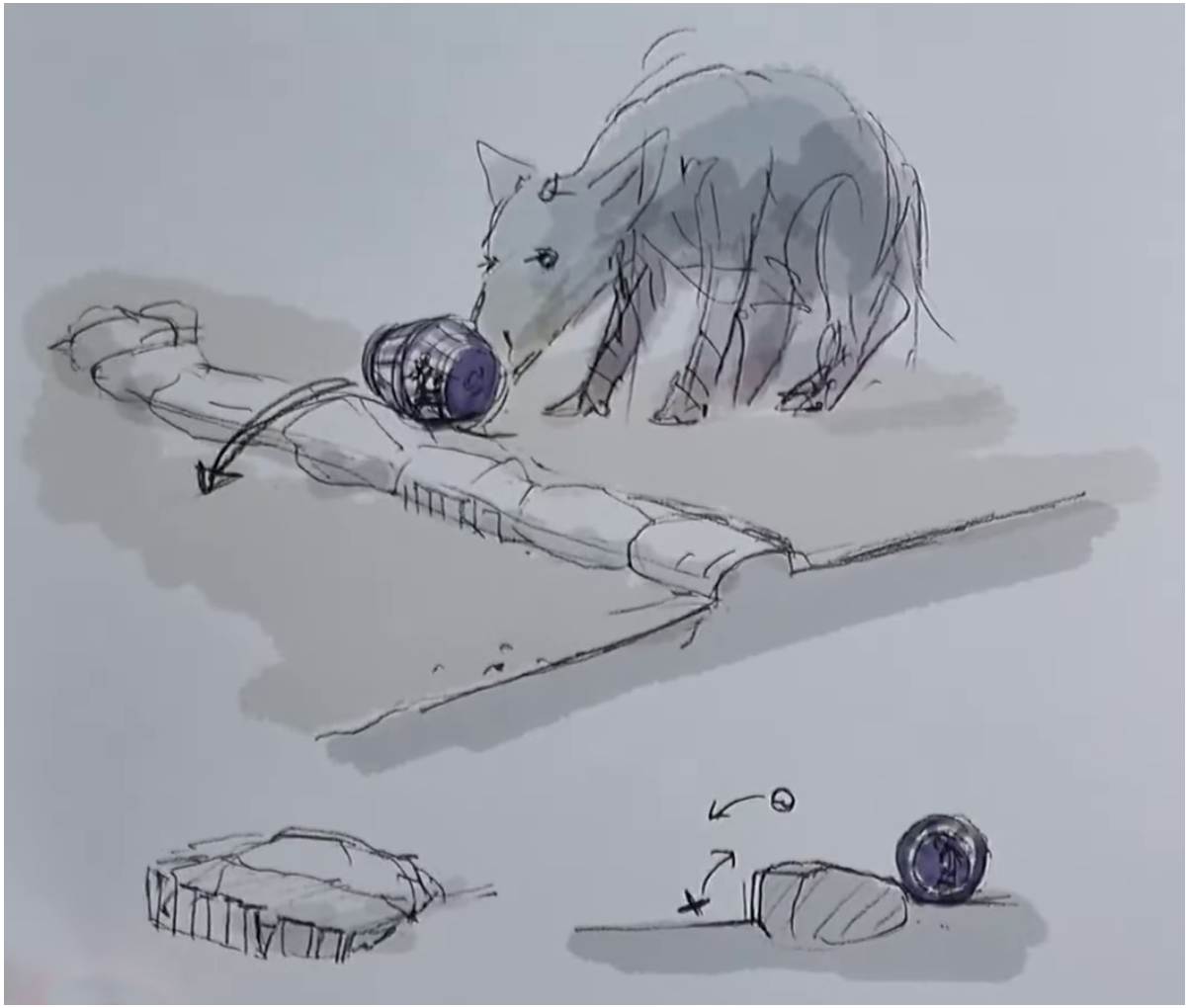
Trapped In A Cage | 29

The darker trico has gone, mysteriously called away. Noises from high above are the first indication that Trico has found the Boy's location. The creature leaps down and carefully inspects the cage the Boy is trapped in.

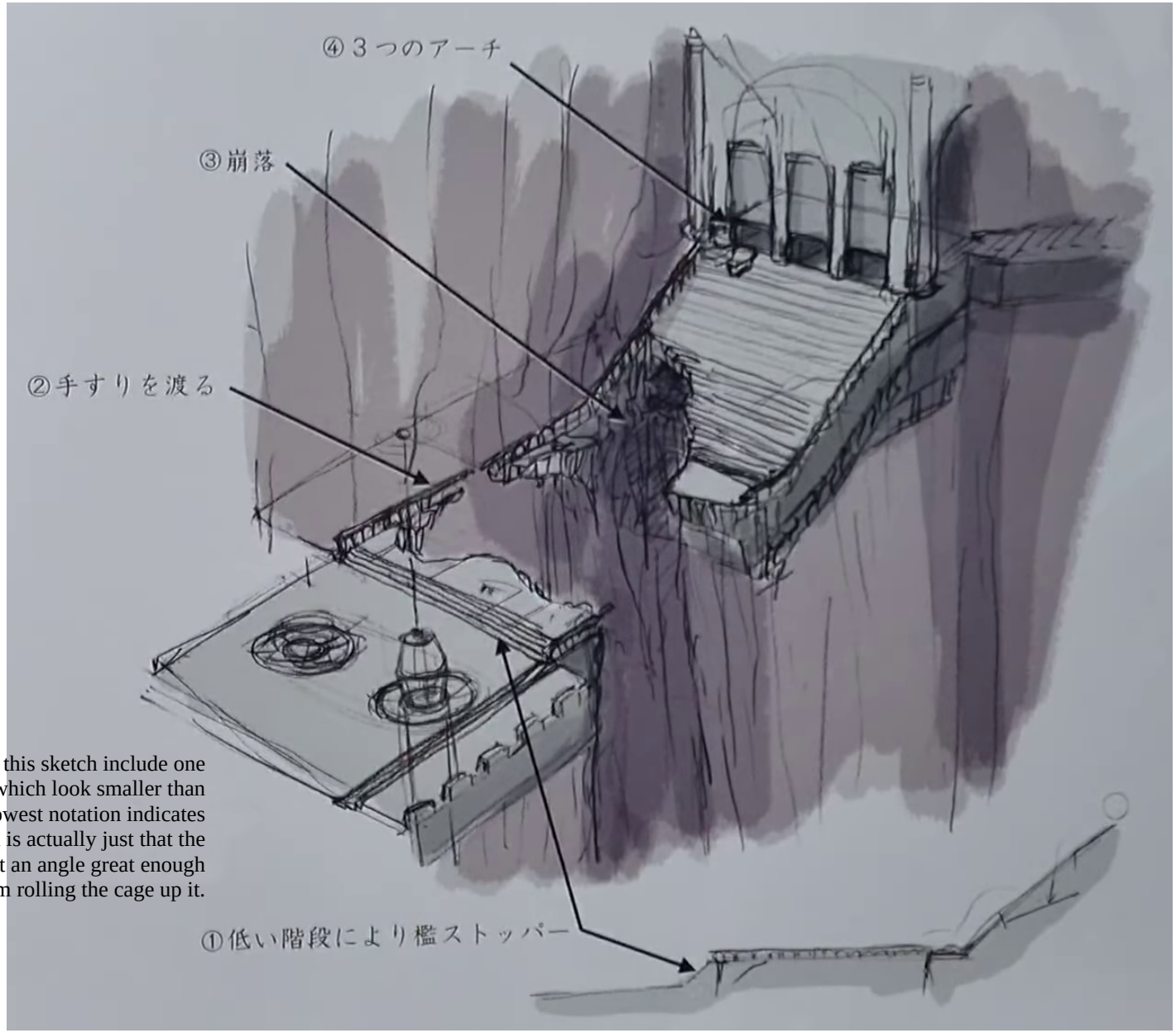
This section of the game feels like an interlude—a short break after the tension of the previous section—though some players find the way the cage controls to be a little frustrating. We asked why the team decided to have the Boy get stuck in a cage? 'Originally," Ueda says, "I had imagined that the boy started the game from inside a birdcage, and would escape his cage to meet Trico. That was part of my original plot. But it didn't fit in well with how we wanted the game to progress, so we put it in the middle of the game instead." And where did this idea come from, we ask? "The idea of the character inside the birdcage was inspired by *Another World*," Ueda replies. *Another World* is a highly influential Amiga and Atari ST game from 1991 [called *Out of this World* in North America] that was also an inspiration for other creators of story-driven games, such as Hideo Kojima (*Metal Gear* series) and Arnt Jensen (*Limbo*).



While this sketch might make the section look like an obstacle course, there's actually no way to fail or fall incorrectly here.



The way that Trico very carefully helps to push the cage shows the creature’s desire to keep the Boy unhurt. The environments in this area had to be meticulously crafted for the cage rolling sequence to work while still giving the player a little control.



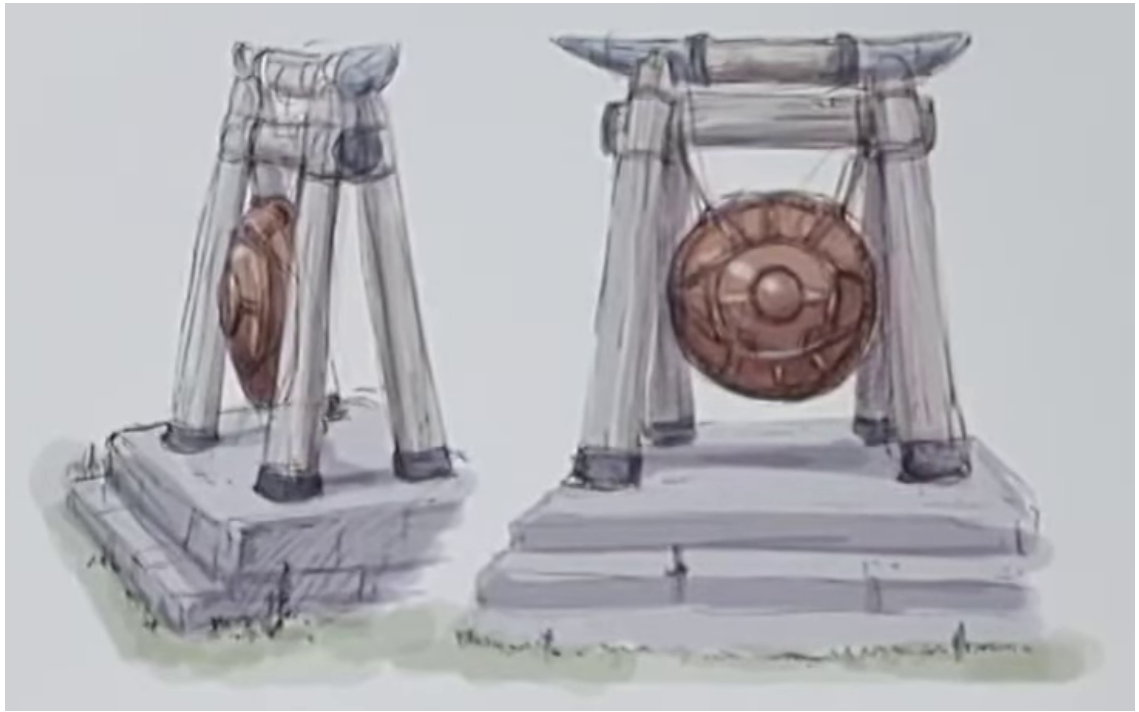
The notations on this sketch include one pointing to ‘3 arches,’ which look smaller than in the final game. The lowest notation indicates a ‘cage stopper,’ which is actually just that the small stairway is raised at an angle great enough to prevent the player from rolling the cage up it.

The Second Antenna | 30

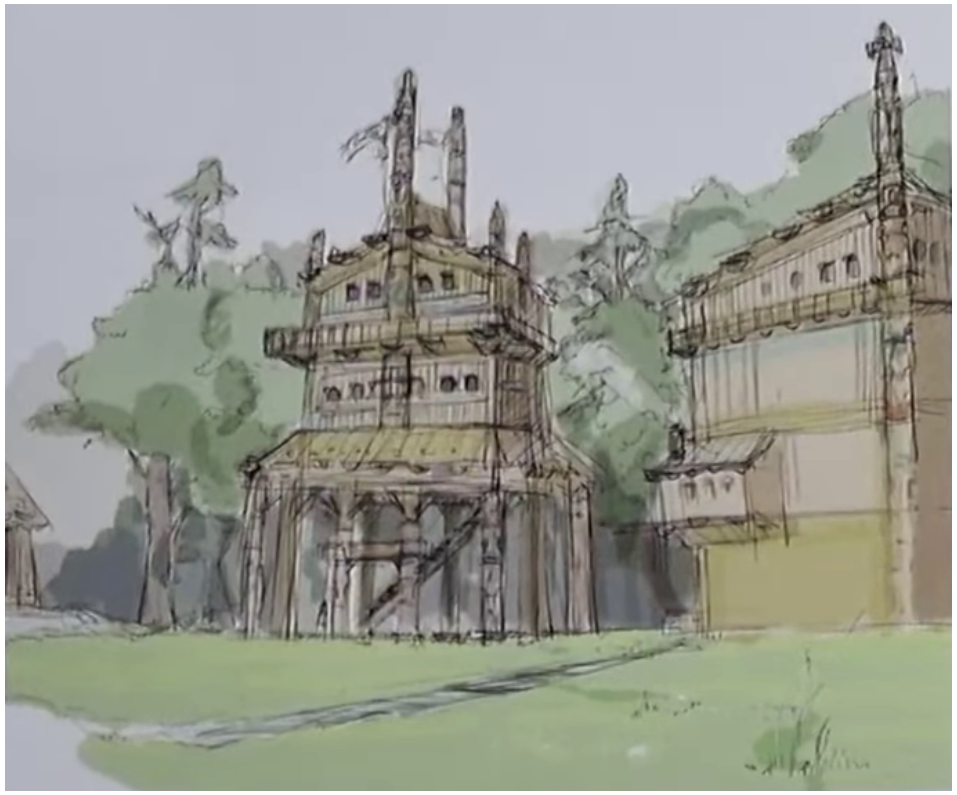
The pair survey an ominous, familiar-looking room—the last time they came across an antenna room Trico ate the Boy—but they have no choice but to make their way through it if they're going to escape from this place.

Much of the game's background story is provided in the flashback that's experienced after Trico swallows the Boy in the second antenna room they encounter. First we're shown the Boy's kidnapping, from his small village amidst a sprawling forest. We have countless questions about this event, and its place in the culture of this world, and the team accommodates us with answers as best they can.

The scene cuts between Trico's flight and the Boy lying in bed, dreaming. While it may suggest a connection between the two—possibly the Boy seeing through Trico's eyes?—the team clarifies that it's merely a camera cut (though once swallowed, the Boy does experience visions of what is happening to Trico). Trico's attack is supposed to be a silent operation, before it accidentally knocks down a nearby brazier.

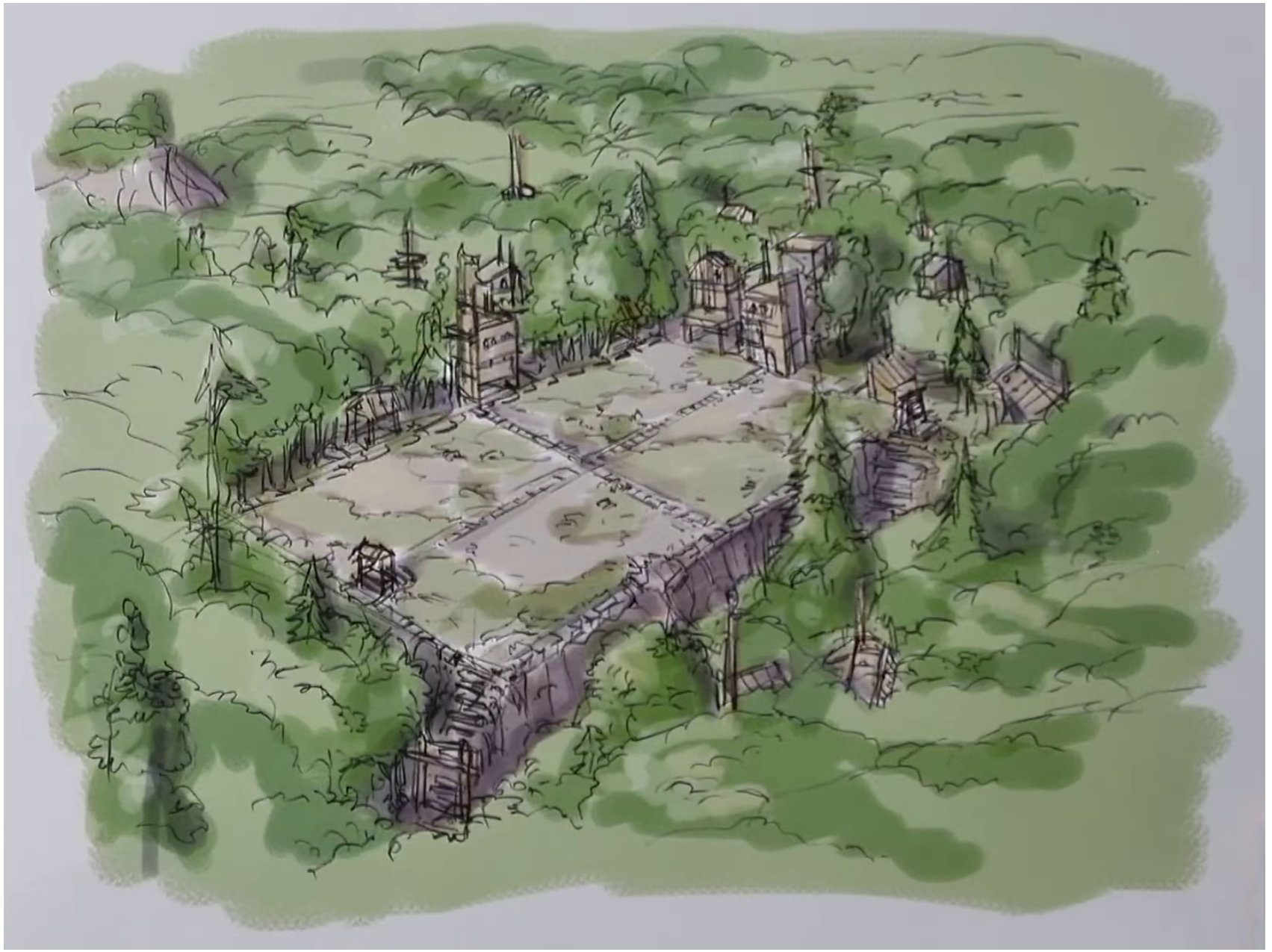


As mentioned earlier, the villagers have heard tales that the eye symbol may scare the tricos, and they've fashioned their gong (used to rouse the villagers during a trico's attack) in its shape.



If the villagers don't quite seem prepared for Trico's attack, that's because it's actually a fairly rare event, at least within a single village—within the course of someone's life, they will only see about two of these attacks. There are many villages though, and when the tricos are seen returning from a hunt at the end of the game, they are returning from different villages (and not the Boy's village, in which Trico's attack was the only one to ever happen for the current generation). The full storyboard for this cutscene can be seen starting on page 218.

We ask if being 'among the chosen ones'—as the Boy is said to be, after he's taken—is a bad thing, since the villagers attempt to stop it? Tanaka answers that, "To the villagers, a trico can kind of come across as an object of worship, like a god of sorts, so it's a little bit more complicated."

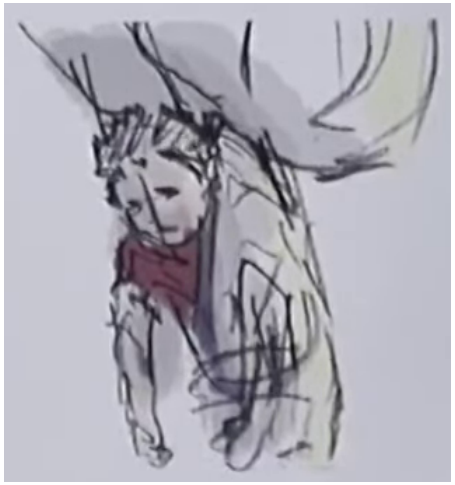


There’s a vine-covered, vertical stone column here that offers a nice view of the Valley below, should you choose to climb to its top. From up there, you may also turn around and notice a nice shelf in the architecture in the wall—yet another spot where the team was originally considering placing a barrel that didn’t make it to the final game.

Trico again involuntarily eats the Boy, but this time the Boy doesn’t awaken. In a garden terrace with the wind gently blowing the trees, the creature attempts to revive its companion.

Jumping ahead a scene, Trico carries the pale, unconscious Boy back outside from the antenna room, desperately trying to revive him, and eventually doing so by laying him gently in a small puddle. Interestingly, Tanaka tells us this is not a ‘cutscene’ in the traditional sense, where the unique animations—such as Trico laying down the boy, trying to nudge him awake, and jumping for joy when he comes back alive—would be hand-keyed. Instead, it’s fully AI-driven with scripting, while procedural animation blends all of Trico’s actions together seamlessly.

We tell the team about some of the genuine moments of surprise we experiences with Trico’s AI, when we’d sometimes turn around and it would be right there following closely behind us. Were we supposed to briefly forget about Trico to allow for those moments to happen? Tanji answers, “There wasn’t anything scripted that specifically makes this happen, but there’s a lot in the design of Trico’s AI that’s driven by coincidence, deliberately created to make Trico feel like a living creature and its movements aren’t always predictable.”



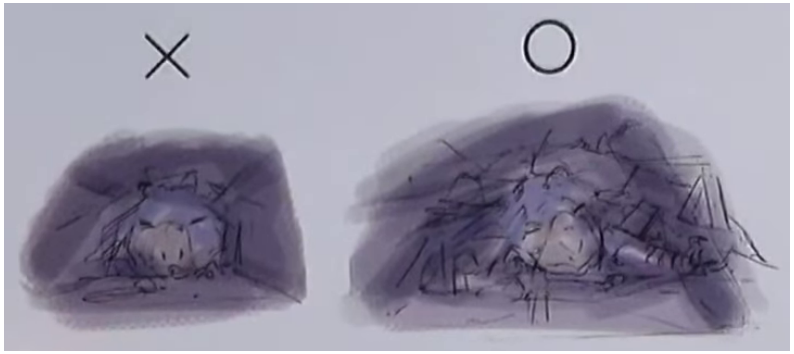
You can visibly see the Boy turn pale in this scene when he loses consciousness. This can also be seen at other points in the game, such as the ending scene.

32 | A Dash To The Tower

The Sentinel Tower is finally within reach, but the bridge leading across to it wasn't made to hold a creature such as Trico. The pair outrun the structure's collapse only to be faced with glass eyes and an army of Yoroi.

Right before Trico jumps onto the big wooden bridge that leads to the Sentinel Tower, it briefly perches next to a ledge and a doorway that the Boy can hop over to and explore. This doorway leads to a short tunnel with nothing but a closed gate at the end—it's yet another spot that was intended for a barrel. The team ended up cutting a lot of barrels at places where it was difficult to throw them into Trico's mouth without the barrel falling down. They didn't want to include anything that felt unfair to the player.

Not every dead end or curious environmental feature in the game is a remnant of a cut barrel, though. Small areas like this being left in for the player to find were also a result of the team wanting the game's world to feel bigger and a little less confined. "You want to have the main path," Tanaka tells us, "but in darker areas you want to hint that there's also more to the world."

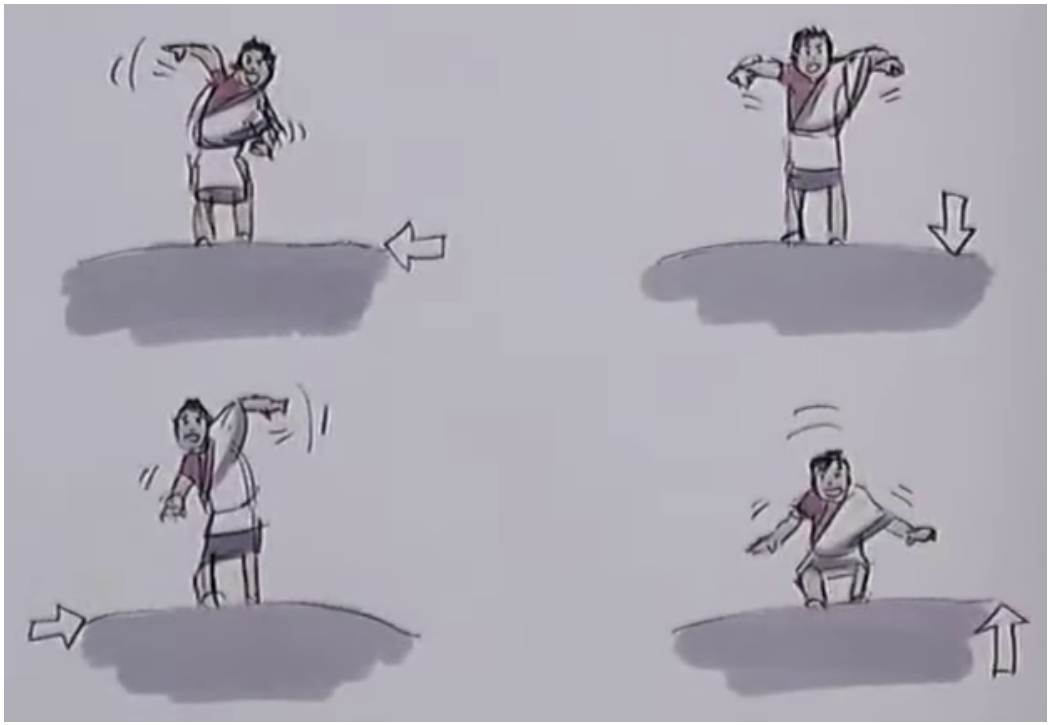


The collapsing mine section just before getting to the bridge is another point of no return for the player. The sense of danger as the mine collapses on the Boy is alleviated by Trico coming to the rescue in the battle that follows.

The end of the bridge that leads to the Sentinel Tower—where the two glass eyes sit during the first approach—used to be fully intact, and was only broken near the end of development, Tanaka tells us. The team wanted to show the lower part of the bridge and a portion of the outer Tower wall (which the Boy needs to navigate to work his way around the now-broken bridge). Ikeda says the team “added this ‘athletic’ section right at the end of development to make approaching the tower more impressive.”

After an arduous journey, the pair are finally within reach of the Sentinel Tower—the most prominent landmark in the Valley, and perhaps their greatest chance of escape. The design of the Tower was heavily inspired by the Tokyo Skytree, one of the city’s most iconic landmarks and the world’s tallest free-standing broadcast tower.

Even from afar, it’s clear that the Tower is made of a different material than the other structures in the game—a strangely smooth, off-white texture that appears to be constructed as a single, seamless object. The team was very deliberate in giving the Tower its own look and feel, and to remind players of the opening mirror room as well. Up close, the Tower’s material is seen to be covered with strange glyphs, which Suzuki applied to the Tower based on a pattern that Ueda had created earlier in the project. They were originally hoping to animate the material, showing it to be shimmering or moving with different glyphs, but ran into technical obstacles.



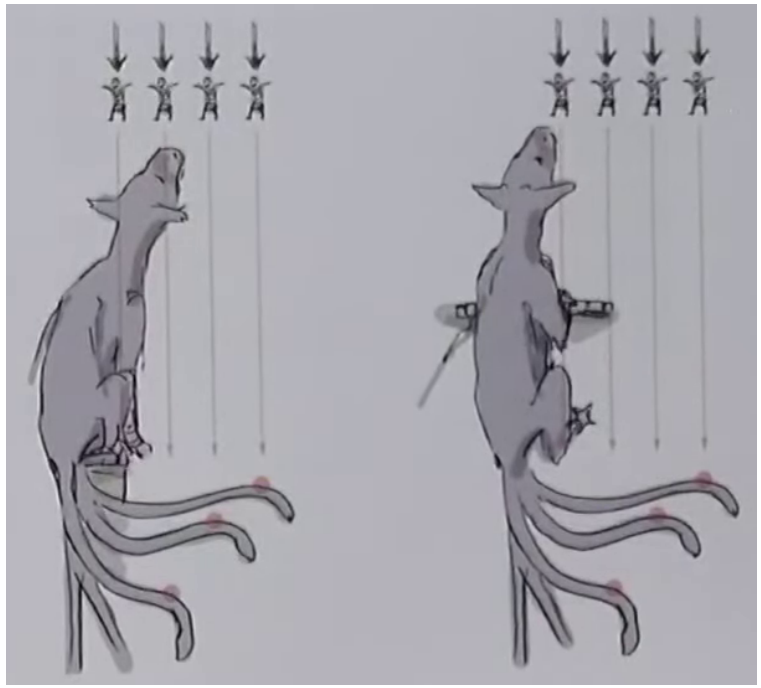
Here we see sketches of the Boy’s balancing animations while riding on Trico. He reacts differently depending on which direction Trico is moving.

Once Trico rescues the Boy from the army of Yoroi outside of the Sentinel Tower, it briefly takes flight before crashing into another tower nearby. Tanaka tells us that Ueda gave direction here to “make sure that Trico didn’t have any sense of hitting the brakes before it hits the tower,” resulting in a beautifully awkward, naturalistic crash-landing.

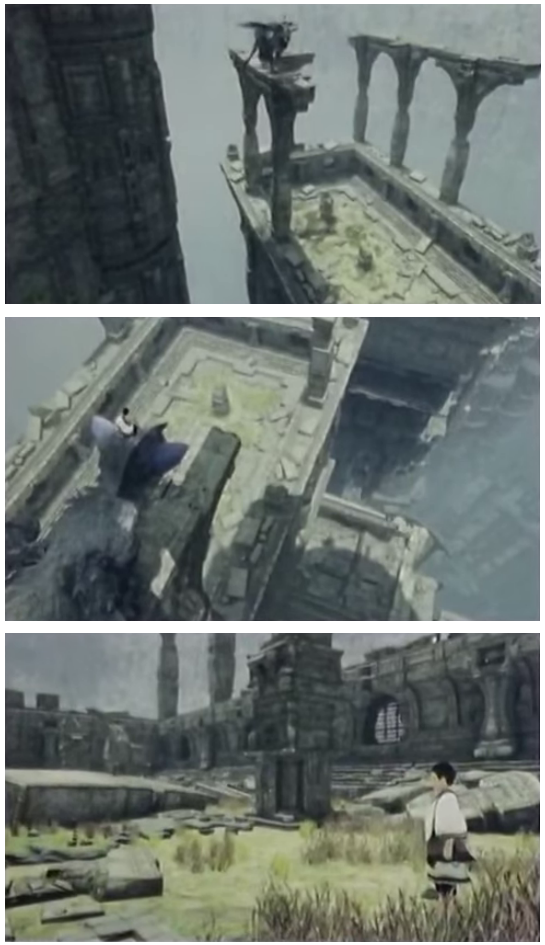
The Crumbling Tower | 33

Trico escapes the bridge and manages to fly a short distance to a nearby tower. The creature's grip is uncertain, and the tower crumbles as it claws for a foothold.

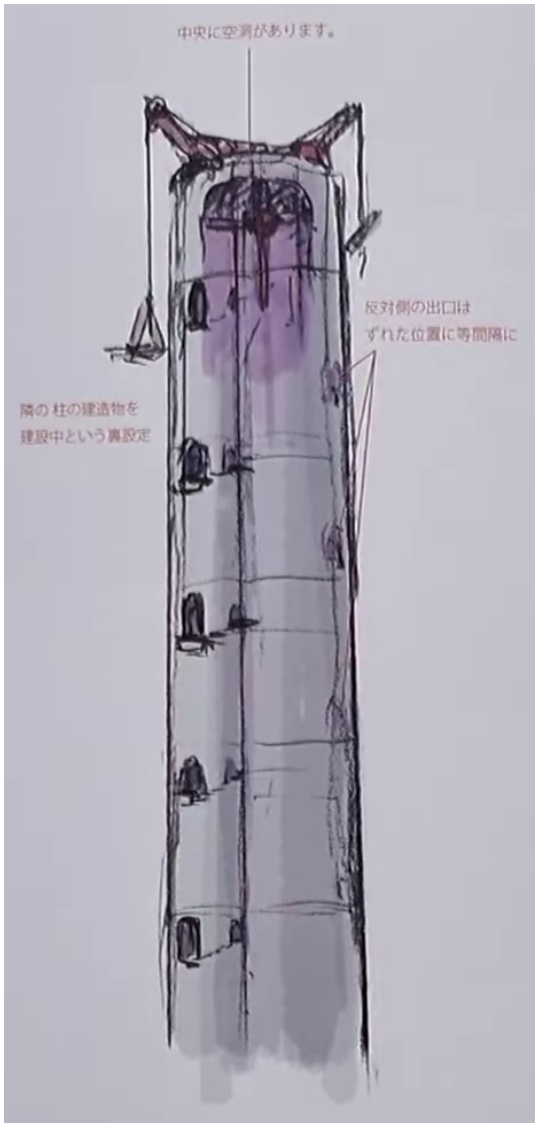
We also wanted to know if *The Last Guardian* was born of the same school of subtractive design that Ueda is well known for, the process of stripping a game down to its most important elements and focusing squarely on those, pruning off anything less than essential. Or was the game more intentionally economic from the start this time? Are there fewer 'leftovers' than we've become accustomed to from their games? The team explains that in *Shadow of the Colossus*, the Colossi were the stages, and the ones that were cut simply weren't as fun in the end. In *The Last Guardian*, the stages are more literal locations—and while they've been less public about what didn't make it to the final game, there were in fact "many" unused stages on the cutting room floor. While at this point we can only imagine what those might be, the knowledge alone will surely inspire its most devoted explorers to try and find where they may have fit into the game's world.



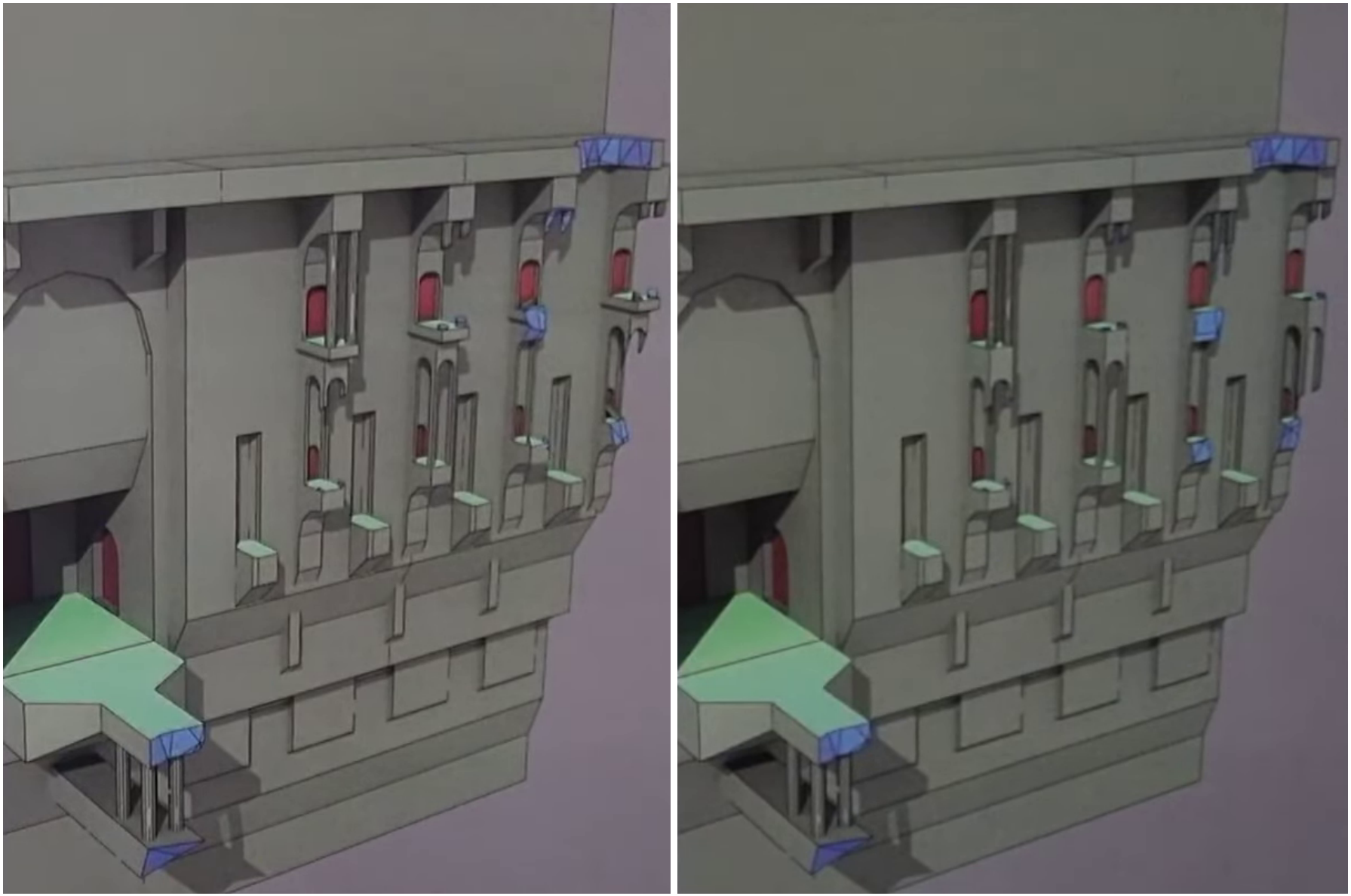
There are a few opportunities to catch Trico's tail during a fall in this area. We weren't sure how critical it was to steer the Boy while falling in slow-motion, but were told that there are at least a few scenes where you must steer to avoid dying (i.e. you can't complete the game without ever doing so).



The walled meadow below this area is one of the more fully-realized, wholly optional areas to explore in the game. At one point, this area was to be used for one of the events where Trico is hungry, and needs to be fed a barrel before it will advance.



The notations on the sketch above are unusual, because they show the structure being designed while considering its history. The note on the left says that in the game's backstory, this column is used as a base to construct the neighboring column structure. After reaching a higher area it's possible to see the top of this tower, with what looks like a construction site at its top. The top note points out the 'large cavity' inside the tower there.



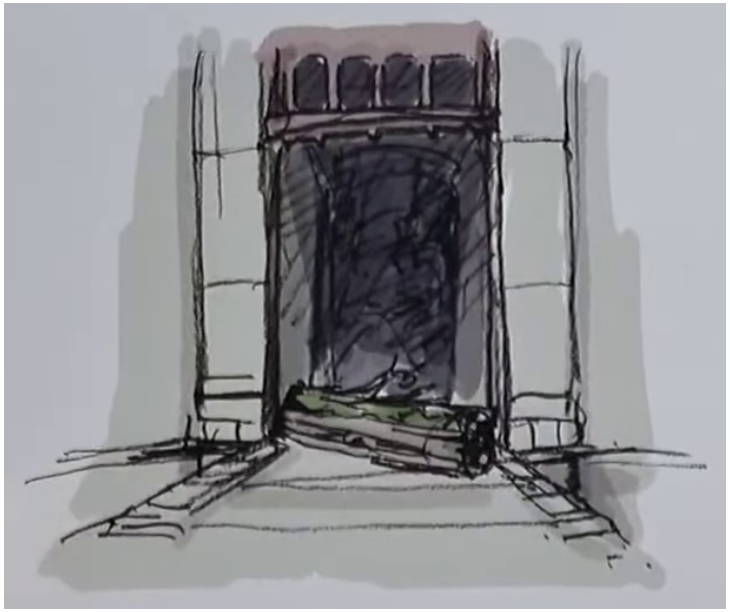
The differences between these two development renders are subtle, but you can see small tweaks in various places to give a slightly more naturalistic feel to the environmental destruction and degradation.

34 | A Savage Battle

After crossing to another tower, something suddenly puts Trico on edge. The Boy looks up as the other trico emerges and stares back down at him. This time, a confrontation seems inevitable.

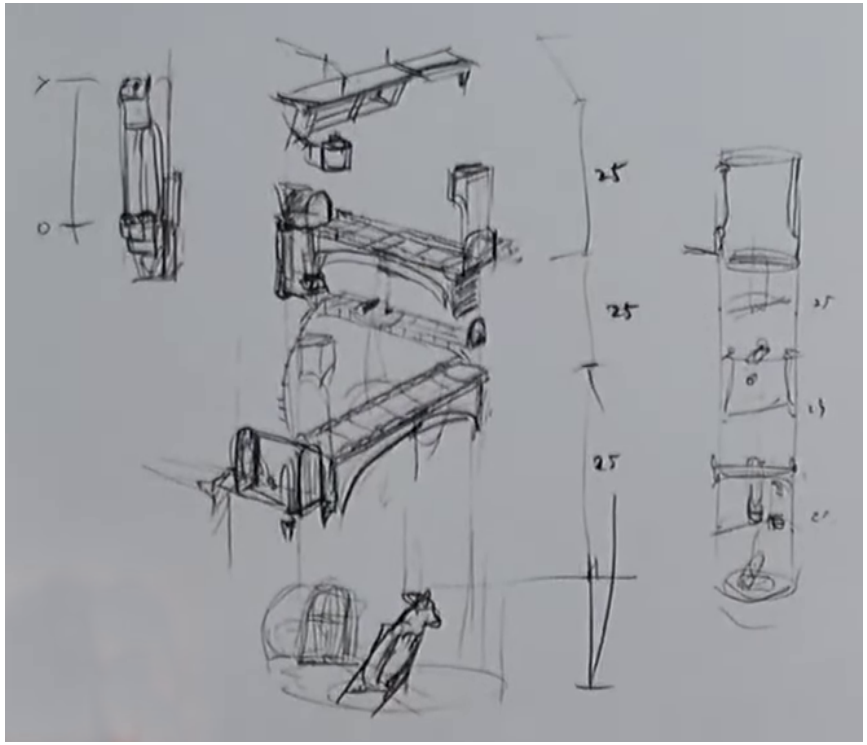
The adventure has been building to a showdown with the mysterious other trico, and the resulting battle, while brief, is chaotic and savage. It's a multi-stage clash, with the Boy helping to tip the scales and push the action downward, one drawbridge at a time.

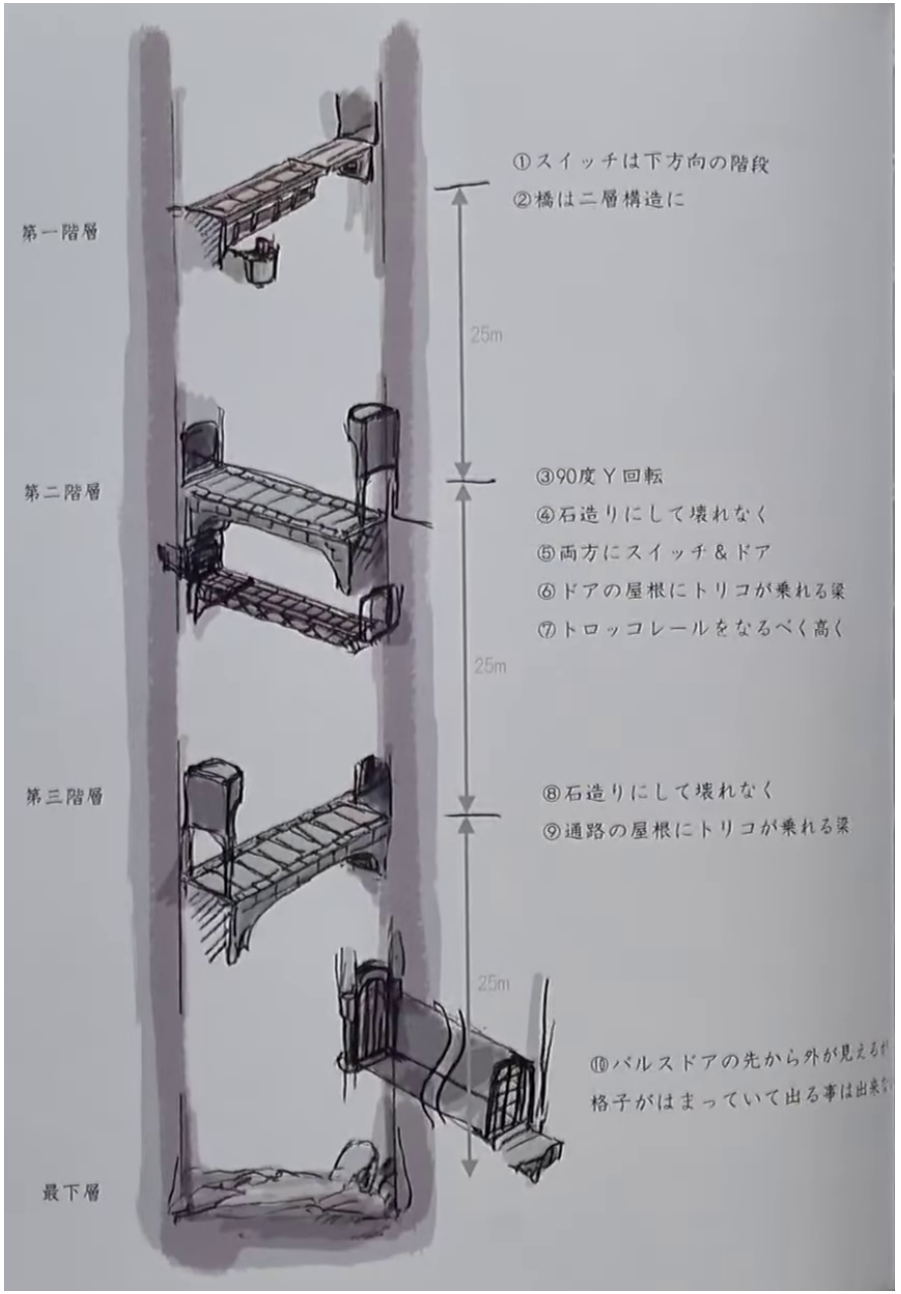
The Boy eventually manages to drop a large metal train cart directly on the darker trico, breaking its mask, and—more importantly—cracking off one of its horns. Without the horn as a receiver, the other trico snaps out of the Core's control, and leaps up and away from the scene of battle (this is another clue that the creature can't fly). Originally, the team planned to keep the other trico's mask on the entire time, for more emphasis on the broken horn, but ended up removing it to show that its face is different.

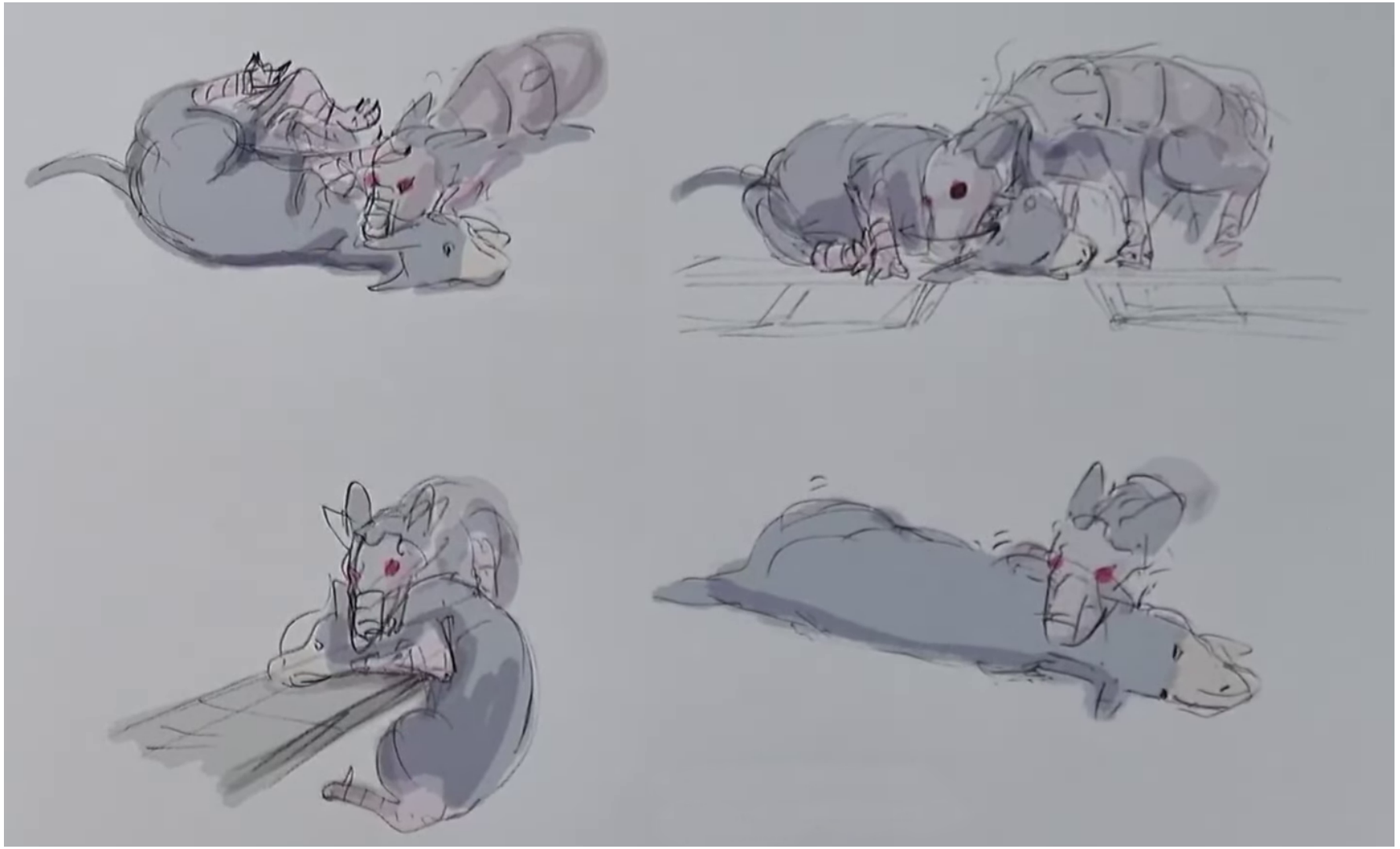


The log under the gate is there as a gameplay tutorial, though it doesn't stand out as such. It gives the player a practice run before they use the next gate to trap the other trico's tail.

The earliest sketches (below) for the battle were concerned with the pacing and the distances involved, so that the environment could be created. This more detailed plan of the tower (right) builds on the measurements from the rough sketch. The plan here shows ten separate ‘developments’, from the top of the tower to the bottom, though the battle actually takes place in three stages across three floors.







The team looked at cats for many of Trico's animations, watching many videos of them, especially looking for unusual movements and strange behaviors.

35 | Trico Is Wounded

As the dust settles, Trico lies still, severely wounded. Even after finding Trico a barrel, the creature is took weak to move, so the Boy goes looking for more. After feeding his companion, they fall asleep together.

Trico is badly injured after the fight, and even after feeding it several barrels it needs further time to heal. The Boy falls asleep next to the creature, and when they wake up it appears to have fully recovered. The team intended to show that time was passing during this event, just as it did earlier after Trico's fall, when the Boy was stuck in the tree. We're told that about a day passes while Trico is injured, and that the entire journey takes place over several days, perhaps even a week, or a month (despite most of the game taking place during the daytime).

There's another thing that should perhaps be taken into account when thinking about the game's timeframe: it's possible to stroke Trico to sleep in large, open areas where there's nothing to grab its full attention (and no Yoroi to agitate the creature). The player, of course, has the freedom to create their own interlude by turning the game off after the beast falls asleep.

We asked if letting too many spears get stuck in Trico's body had any effect. Sakai said that "even if a million spears got stuck there would be no effect on gameplay (though it makes me sad to think about that)."

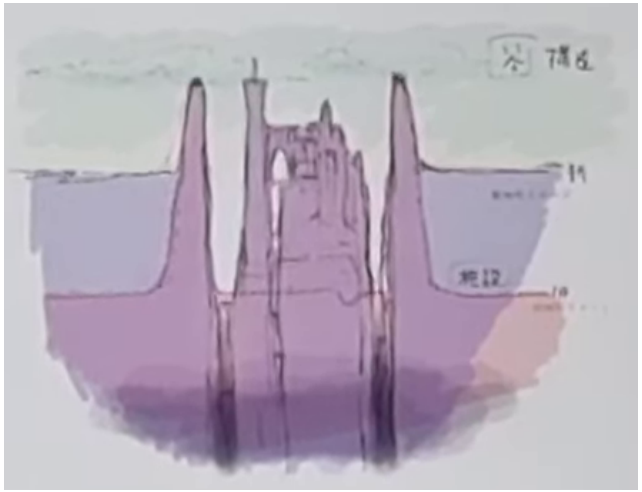
After Trico recovers and the pair near the top of the tower, it's possible to get Trico to jump to where you entered the area from, and then go back out via the high window. Outside you'll have some amazing views in the light of the sunrise and can make out the construction work on top of the crumbling tower.

Sunrise Ascension | 36

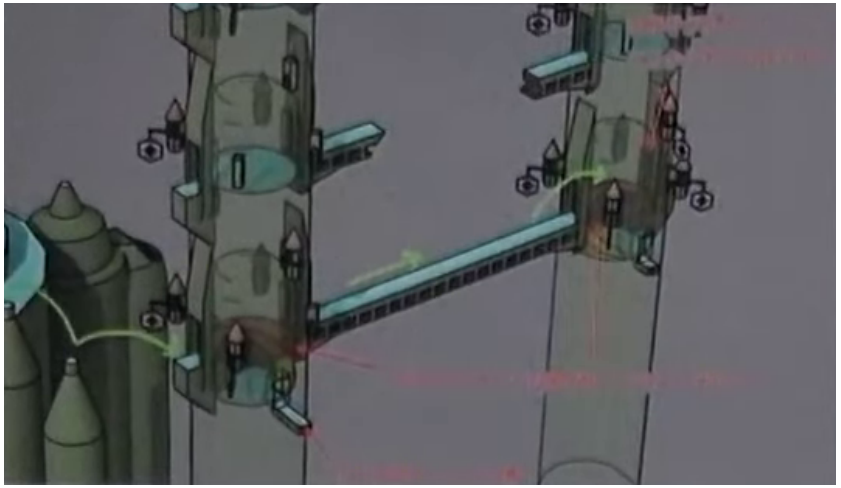
The Sentinel Tower is once again tantalizingly close. Reaching it means crossing a few more towers with glass eyes suspended on all sides. Luckily, the Boy has the Mirror in his possession once again.

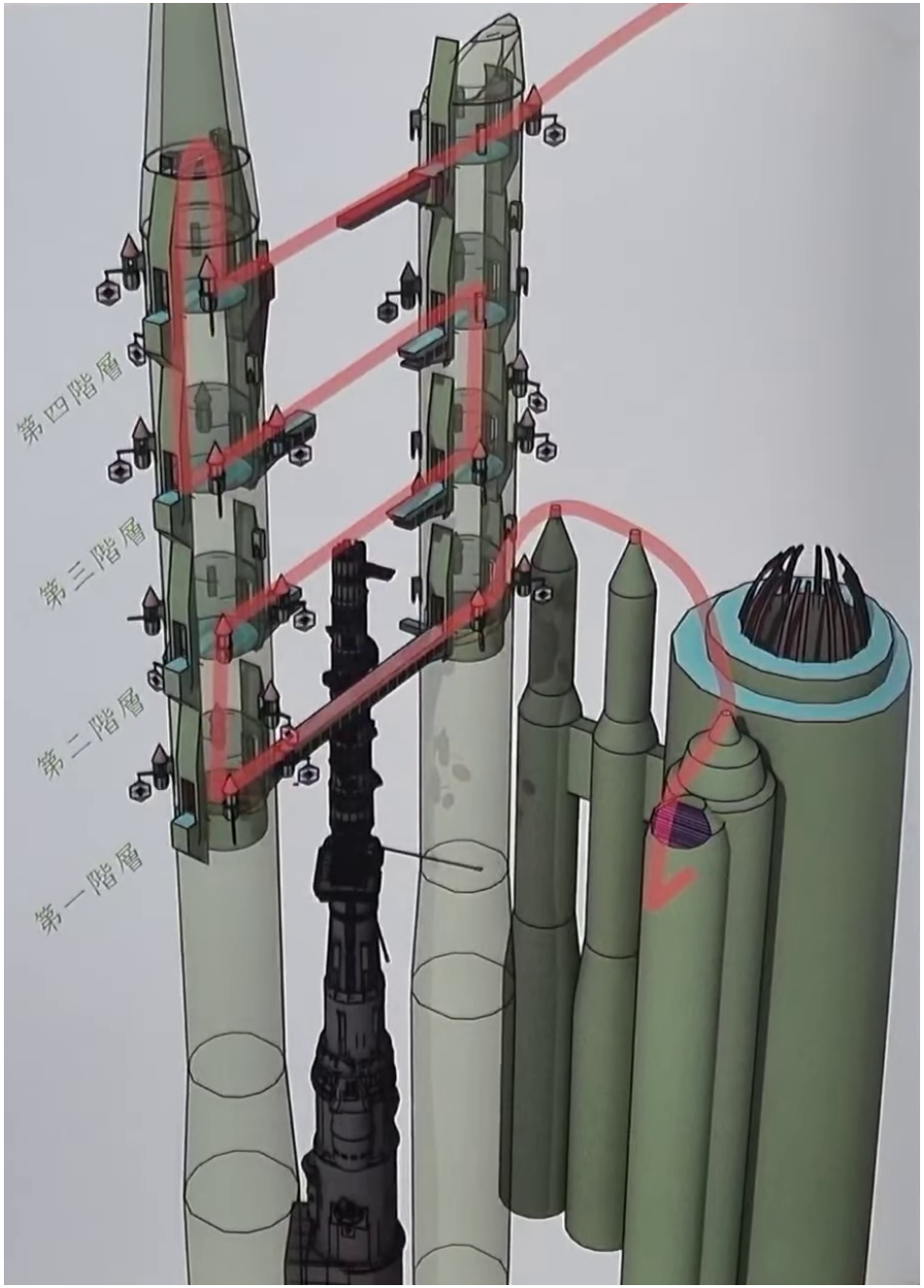
The pair's ascent through this area is perhaps the game's most visually stunning section, as the light of sunrise basks the Valley in golden hues while Trico's shimmering feathers flutter gently in the wind. From very early on in development, this section of the game was meant to take place at sunrise, so that Trico flies off into the morning light at the end. There was substantial thought put into the color palette and the visual progression, so that as you progress higher up, the lighting would start off dark and become more intense with the sunrise. Tanaka explains further, "We had this image of the sunrise hitting the Valley from the side. You're in the shadows inside the Valley, and the light only hits the tallest part of the antenna on the central tower. So when you finally get to the top, you see the light."

Talking of fluttering feathers, Sakai mentions that Trico's body is covered in eight different variations of them. The team use these eight feathers in combination with fur simulation and they try to carefully place them to avoid the appearance of repetition or patterns.



One of the game's recurring fan theories is based around the Core being an alien presence of some sort, the Sentinel Tower its ship, and its landing perhaps having created the crater it resides in. The team admits that the crater was designed to have a sci-fi bent to it, and that Ueda was on a similar wavelength when coming up with the concepts, but that doesn't mean that's what is going on in the game.





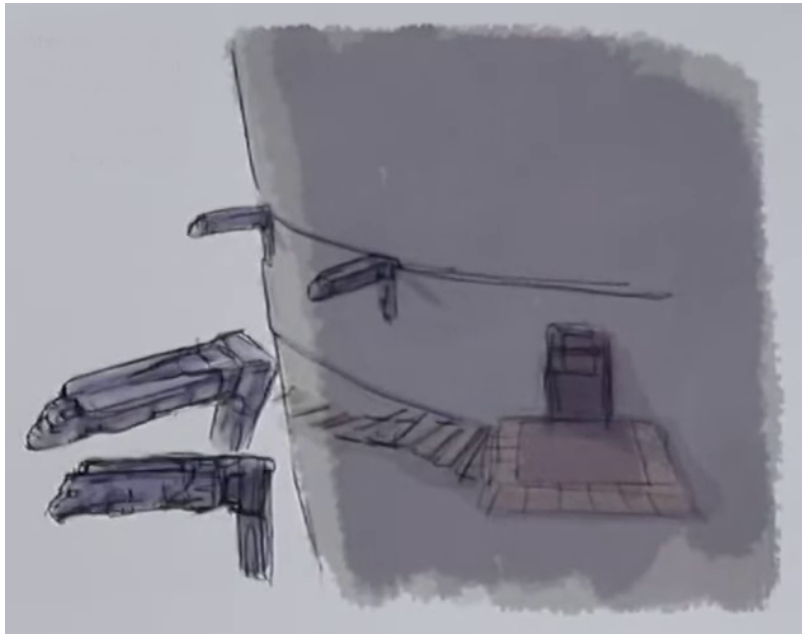
As with so many other sections of the game, basic renders were used to map out the level design here. The pair's route up the towers and the position of the glass eyes was carefully planned, but choosing where to place checkpoints was difficult—a fall half way up a tower can result in a lengthy retread, with destroyed glass eyes suddenly intact again. Destroying the glass eyes from afar before making your way up the towers reduces this problem considerably.

Much of this section was designed to ensure that parts of the towers didn't look like Trico could get on top of them, such as giving the smaller towers pointed roofs.

The Boy makes full use of the newly-reacquired Mirror to blast apart the large glass eyes that threaten their progress around every turn while climbing the towers. With rare exceptions, if you can see the glass eyes hanging, even from a far distance, you can destroy them with a well-aimed tail shot—a very intentional bit of design. "This is the time for the player and Trico to overcome the glass eyes completely," Tanaka tells us, "whether up close or far away, to give them a feeling of making real progress."

We're told that all of the tricos have the tail lightning power, but only the main Trico can use it, since the Mirror was paired with it early in the game (though it could just as easily have been paired with a different one of the tricos). Much like Trico's horns and wings are healing through the game, its tail is too, which allows it to fire a more powerful blast shot once fully healed. Which came first, we ask, the fiction of Trico's tail lightning power, or puzzles that then required the power to be created? Tanaka tells us definitively that "The ability and the fiction was finished first, and the puzzles came out of that."

When you're trying to concentrate on jumping from one to the next it's easy not to notice that these footholds are carved into the shape of sleeping tricos.



37 | You Can Fly?

With a sizeable runway established, the path to the Sentinel Tower is clear. Trico retreats and then launches into a sprint before taking off. The creature doesn’t falter; the pair are flying!

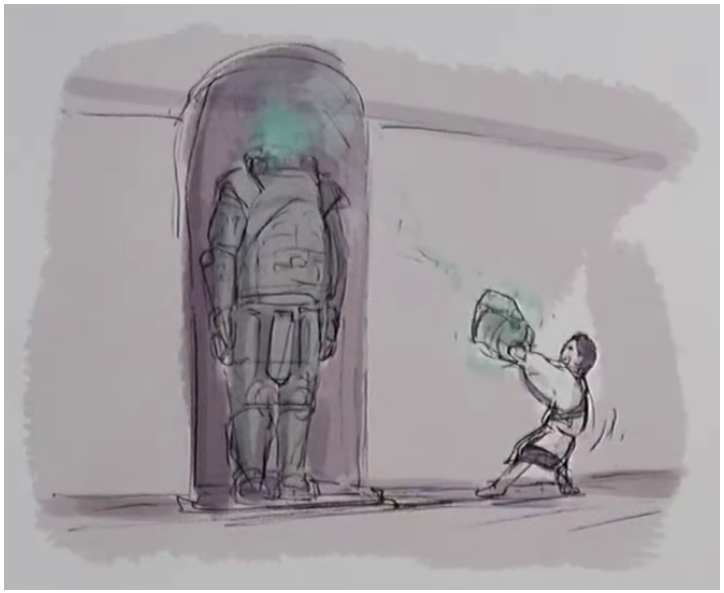
The team cautiously ask us what we thought about the moment when Trico first manages to properly fly. They know a lot of the game’s emotional weight hinges upon it, and want to know if we found it too obvious, or if it felt like it fit naturally into the game’s progression. We reply that it’s a beautiful moment, and makes complete sense after watching Trico’s wings slowly grow back over the course of the game. At this point, its wings are once again at their full size, but before now it could not have flown—the damages wings simply couldn’t carry a creature of that size. Tanaka says that the team worried that this wouldn’t be obvious, and that players might ask “well if Trico can fly now, why didn’t it just fly away from the Valley earlier?.” So, it was important to the team to show the injured wings healing gradually (without forcing the information on the player), and they also made sure that this is the first place where Trico has a long, straight patch of ground to use as a runway.

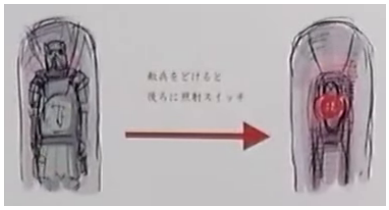
Climbing back and forth between the towers before Trico’s first big flight can feel a bit arduous by the end—despite the glorious setting—but the narrative concept is perfect. Tanaka enlightens us: “The theme or the idea behind this area is that here Trico is learning how to fly and gaining confidence. It’s a practice space.”

38 | The Sentinel Tower

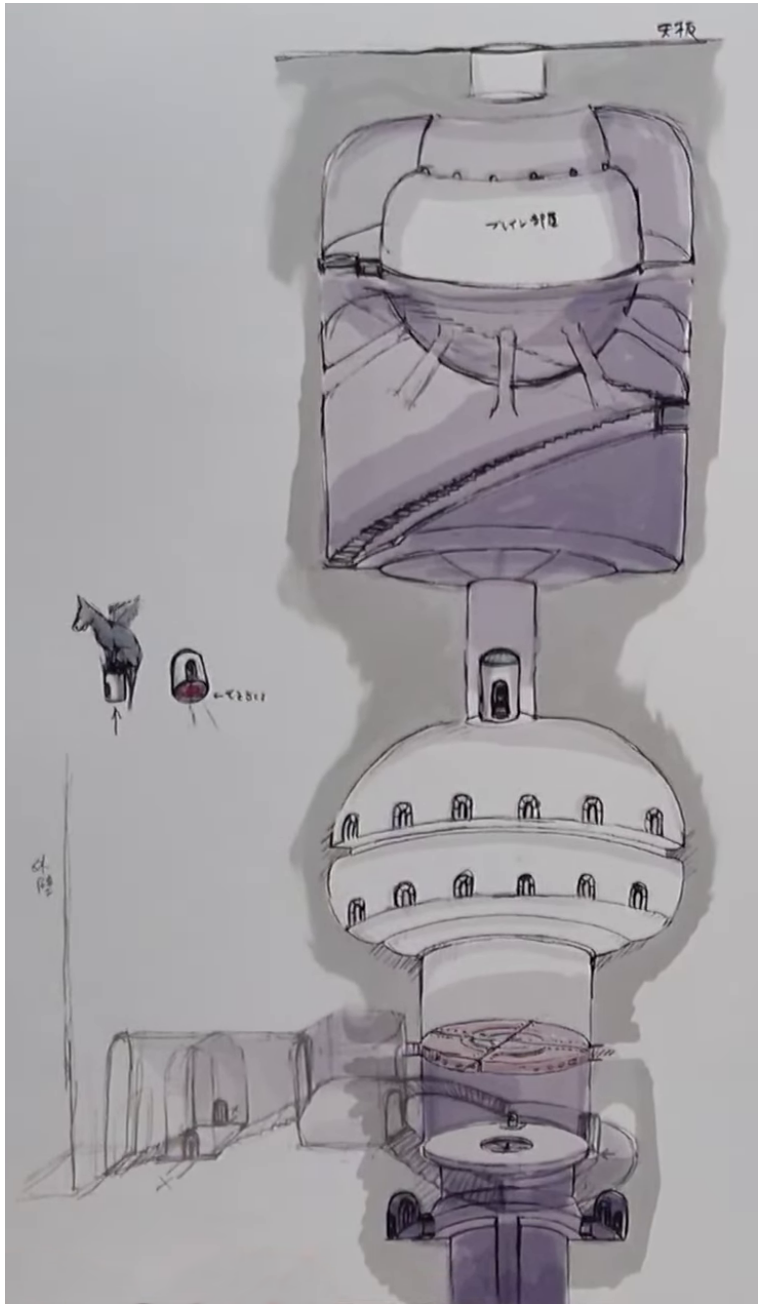
The flight to the Sentinel Tower was successful, but upon landing the pair are greeted by a welcome party composed entirely of armed Yoroi.

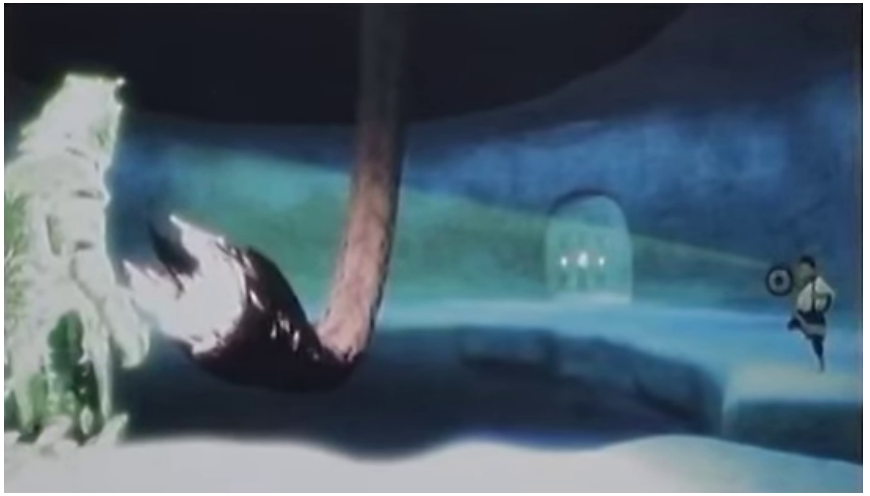
After landing back at the Sentinel Tower following Trico's first real, triumphant flight, the Boy and Trico must battle a large horde of Yoroi who lie in wait. After defeating them, the pair work their way around the back of the Tower, where the Boy must place the Mirror in a small plinth to gain access to the interior of the Tower. It wasn't always this way, and was originally just a switch that needed to be flipped, but changing it killed two birds with one stone, as Tanaka explains: "The idea was that we wanted to give some more meaning to the Mirror. Also the first time you come here you don't have the Mirror. We wanted to make sure that you couldn't enter at that time, so making the Mirror into a key was a good solution for this."



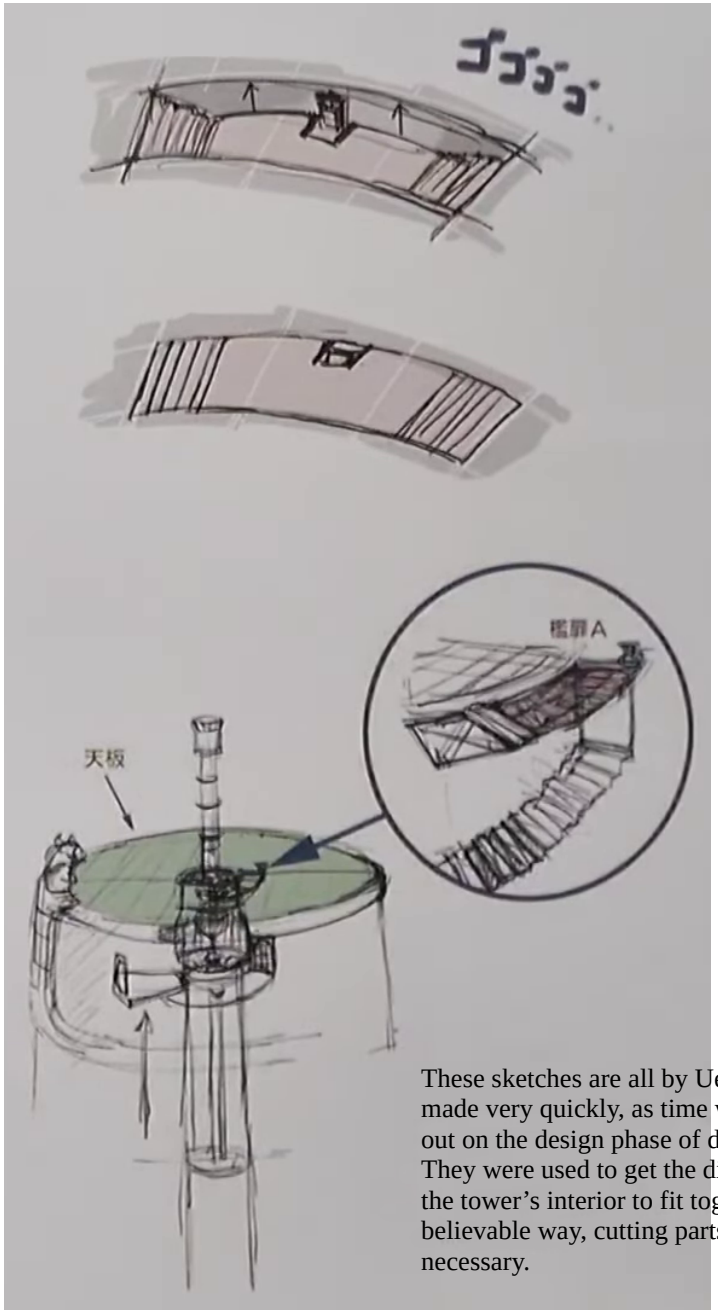


One of the more satisfying animations in the game involves placing the Mirror into the various slots that it needs to go, and feeling a magnetic pull as it locks into place—this was a touch added late into development, as the team wanted it to feel a little better than it did.

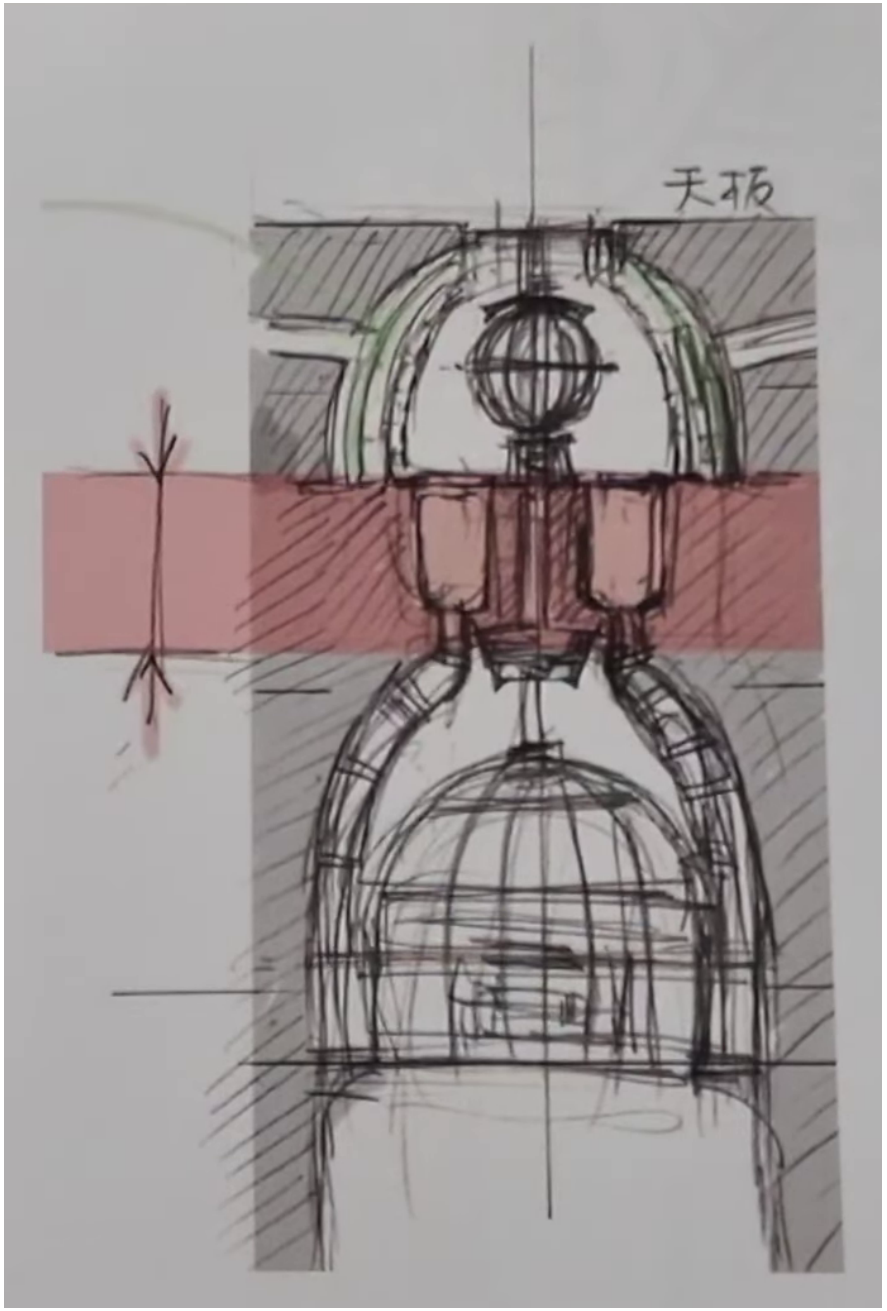




The team tell us that from this point in the game, from using the Mirror as the key to the Sentinel Tower onward, the design was entirely thought of by Ueda. Also, this area is a good example of there being multiple solutions to a puzzle; in the room where the elevator needs to be powered up, the player can push the Yoroi off the edge, run around avoiding them while triggering the switches, or simply blast them with lightning via the Mirror.



These sketches are all by Ueda and were made very quickly, as time was running out on the design phase of development. They were used to get the different parts of the tower's interior to fit together in a believable way, cutting parts out when necessary.

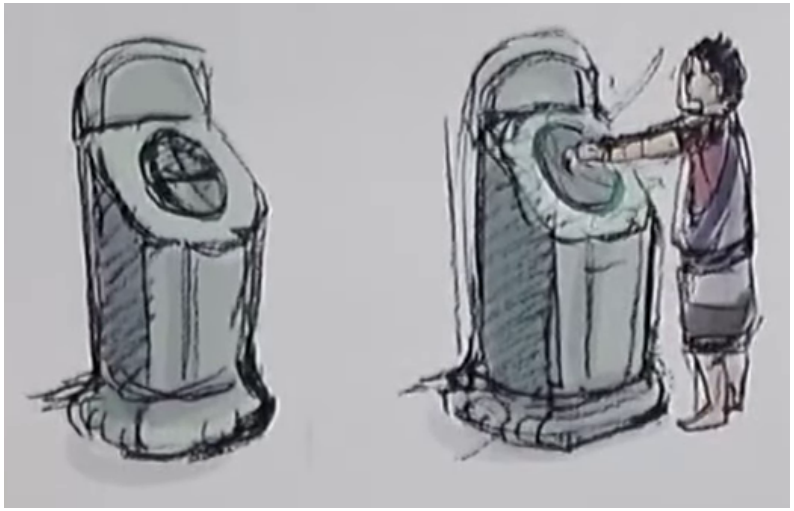


39 | Master Of The Valley

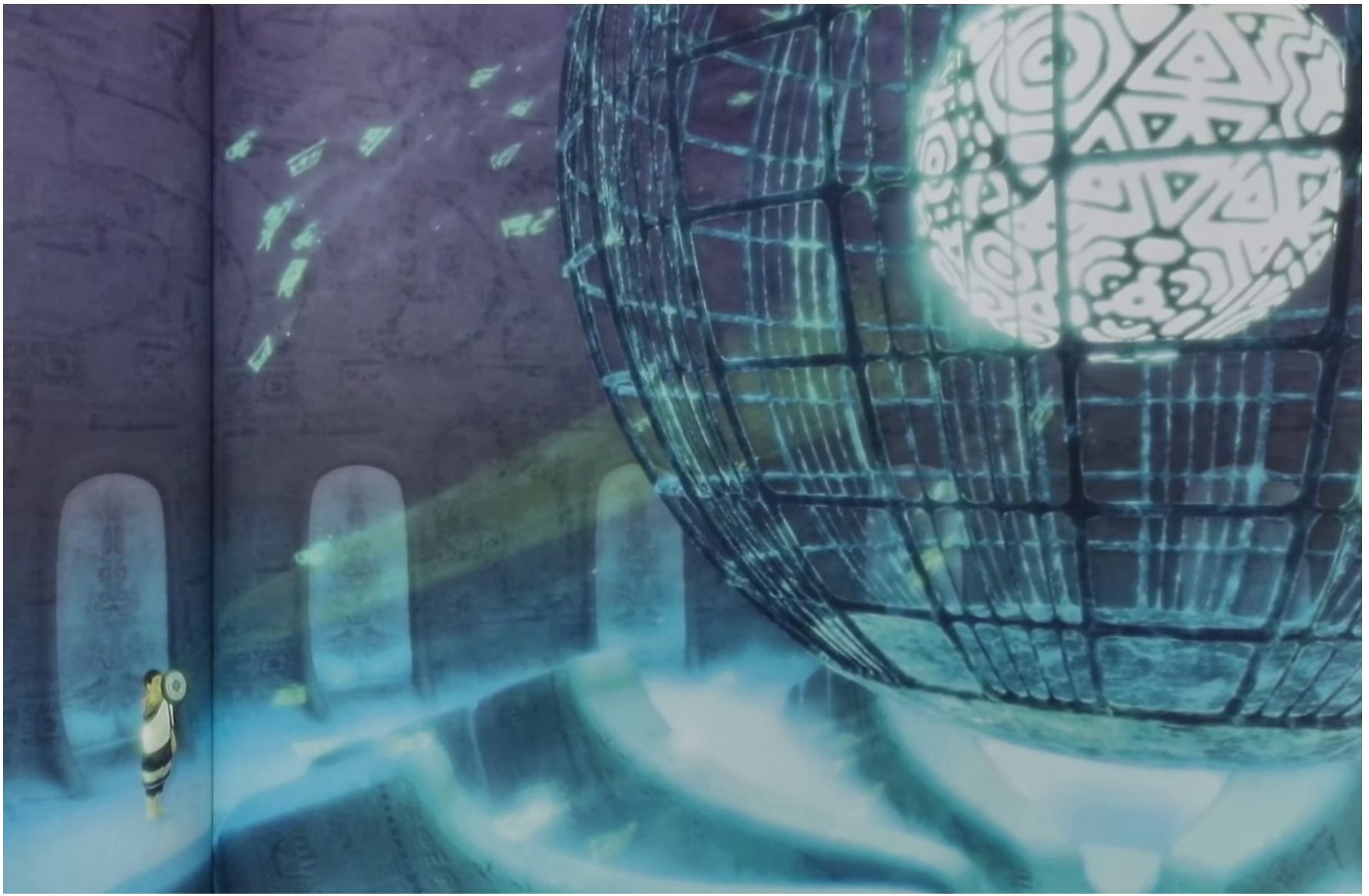
After making their way through the mysterious innards of the Sentinel Tower, the Boy is separated from Trico and finds himself in a room with an ominous black and green sphere.

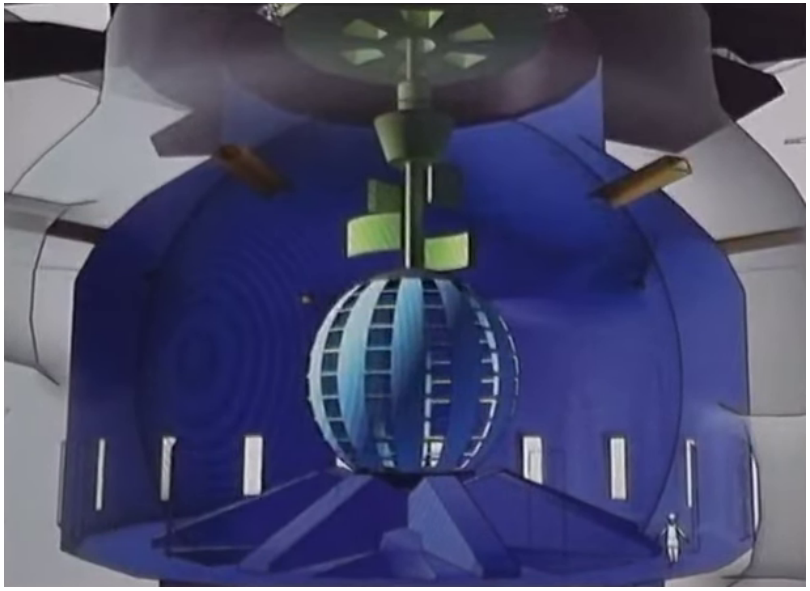
After exploring and battling their way through the depths of the Sentinel Tower, the Boy and Trico finally reach the zenith. The Boy crawls through a tube, only to drop in on what the narrator tells us is the Master of the Valley, the Core that controls the tricos and the Yoroi, and which seemingly controls the fate and purpose of countless children who have been brought here (technically, Ueda clarifies for us, the trico may take an older person instead; the chosen are not limited to just children).

Everything in and above this room has its role in running the Valley and harvesting the chosen, from the pools on the floor, to the doors that cover its walls (essentially the other end of the blue doors that appear throughout the game), to the quivering black sphere of the Core itself.

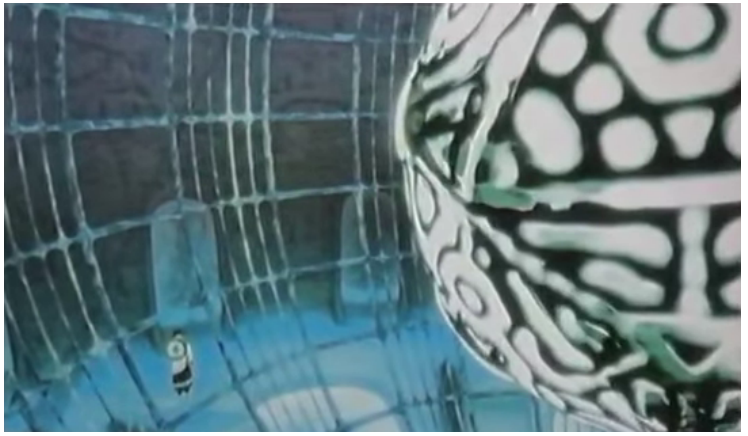


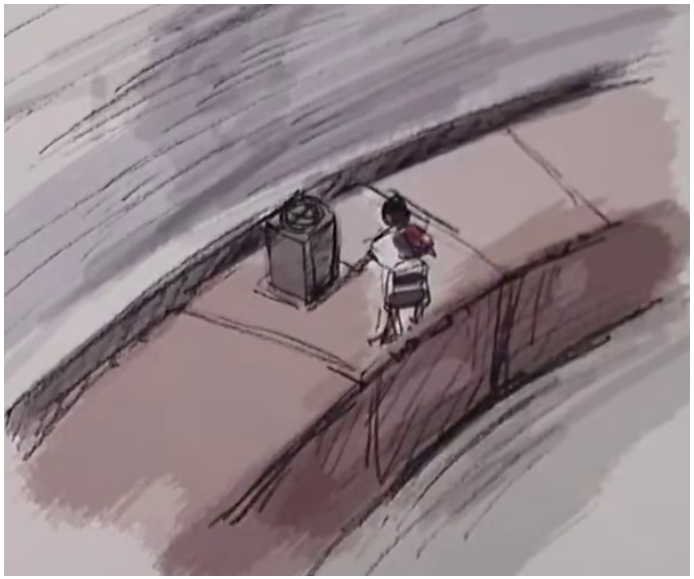
It’s actually possible to activate most of the plates that accept the Mirror as a key simply by shining its light directly at the touchplate for a second or two.

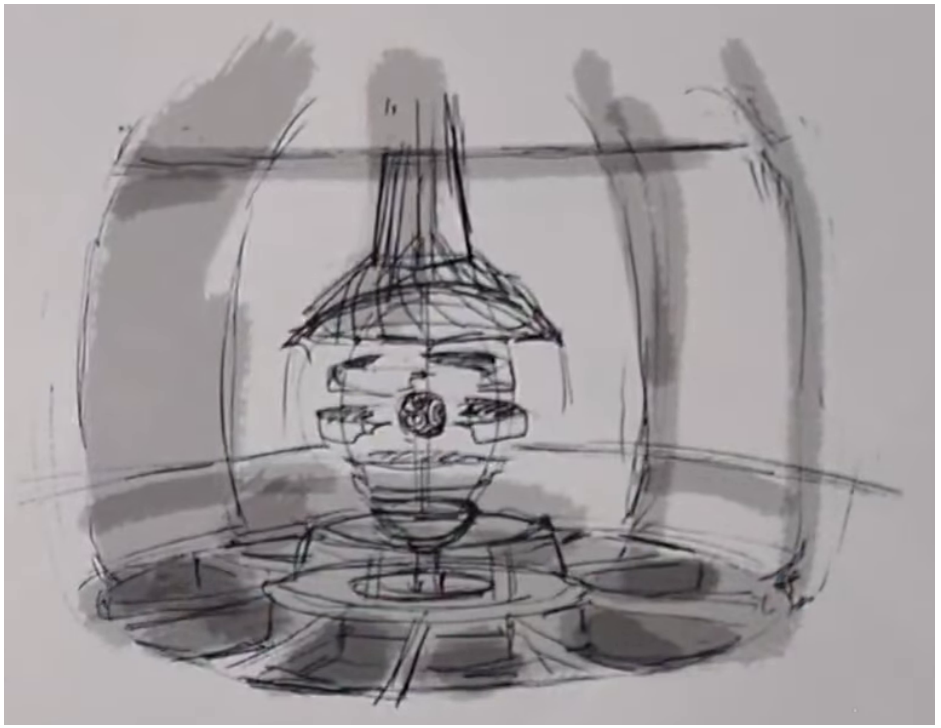




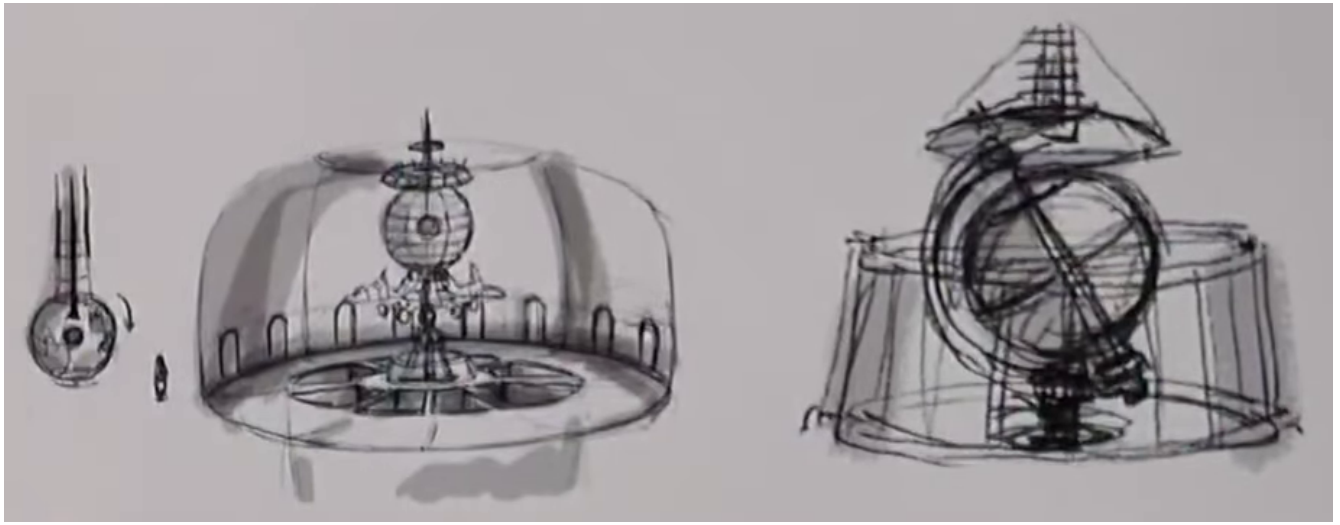
We notice that both the Mirror and the structure above the Core have a greenish, copper-like textural similarity to the save couches found in *ICO* and the save shrines found in *Shadow of the Colossus*. An intentional design choice, we're told.







The fan being built into the structure of the building gives the impression that the Core would overheat without it, much like a fan and heatsink in a computer. It’s actually the opposite, the team tells us: it’s cold air escaping the Core.

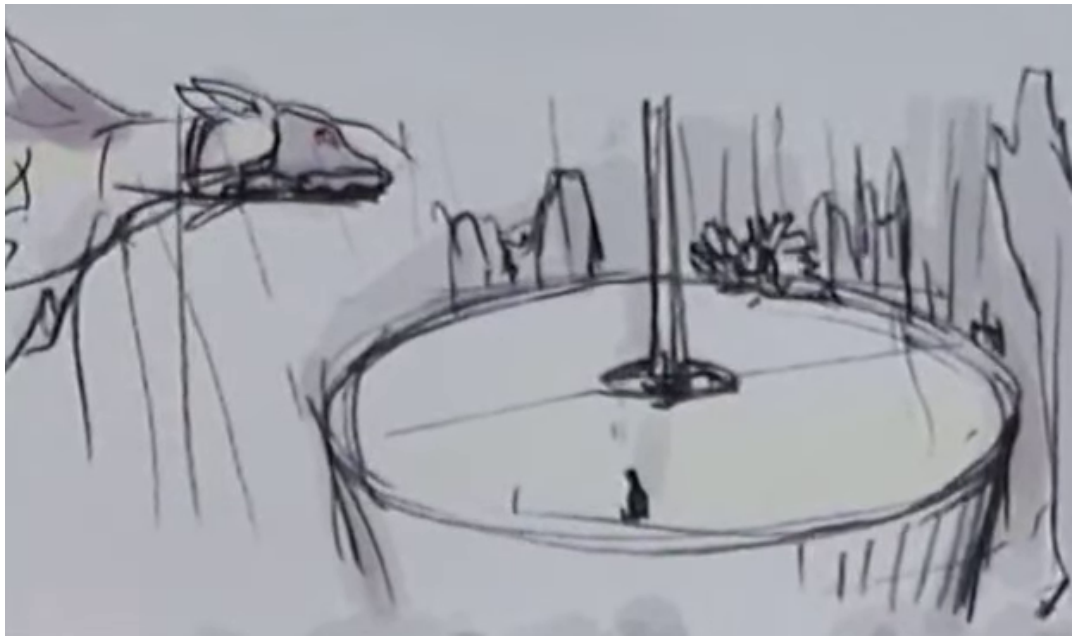


Battle At The Top | 40

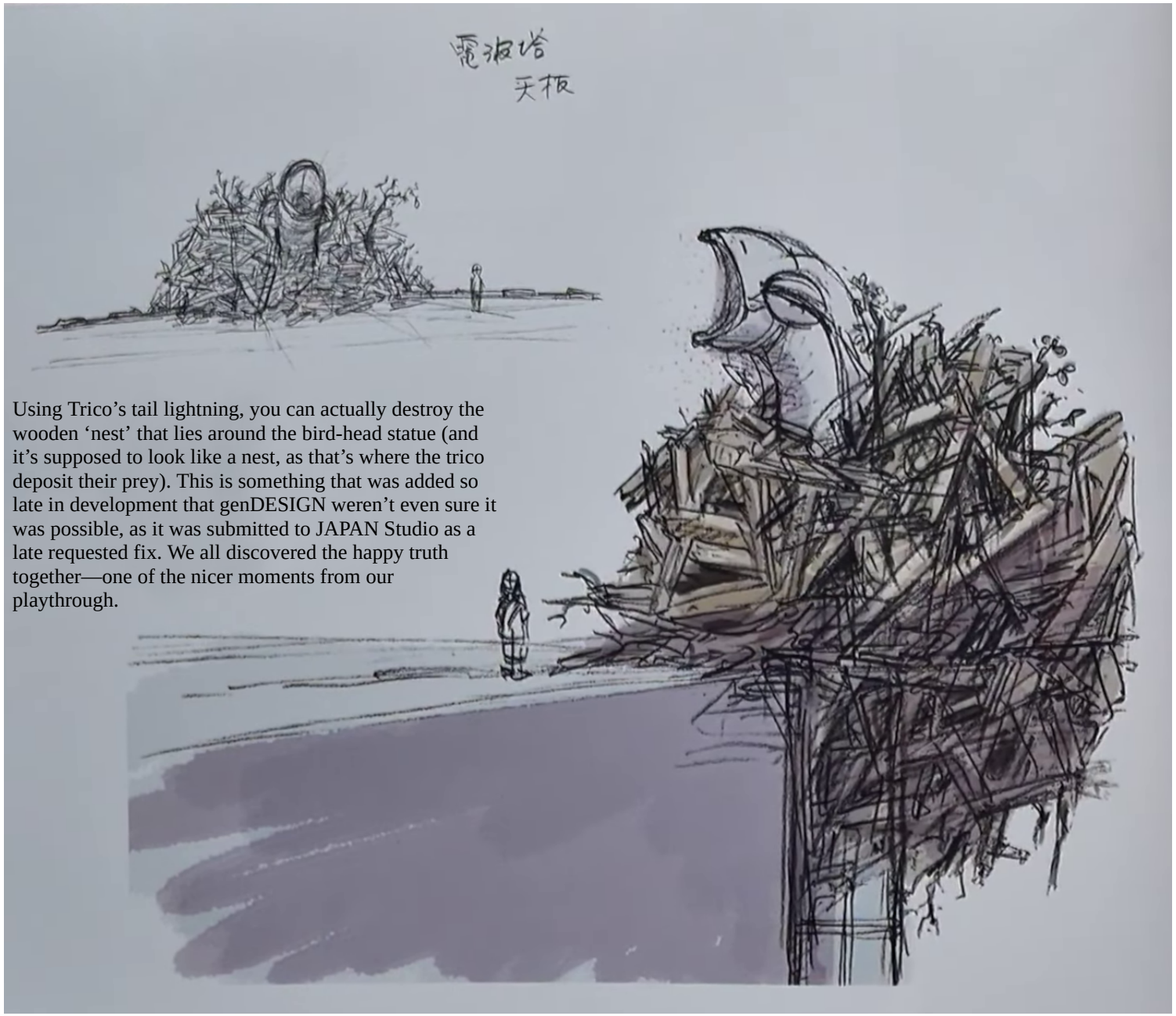
The pair reach the very top of the Tower as the sun hits it, and a signal is sent out, calling the other tricos back to defend the Core. Now they face their most dangerous battle yet.

There’s a lot to take in on the rooftop of the Sentinel Tower, a final frontier of sorts. A slow, quiet moment between Trico and the Boy; a view of the last antenna, towering high above; a large, bird-headed statue, to which the chosen ones are deposited by the returning tricos. And soon after, a vicious, one-sided gang attack as the 16 other beasts attempt to tear Trico limb from limb.

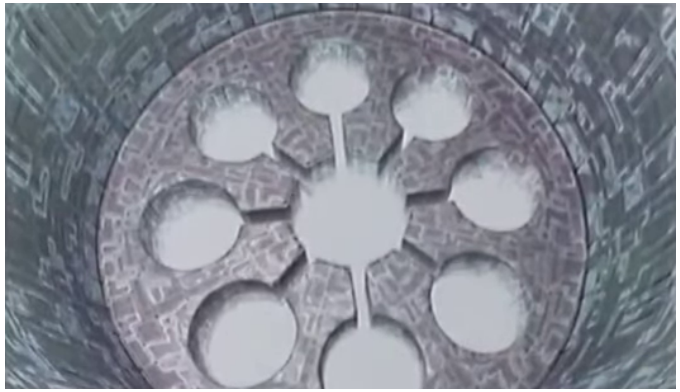
Substantial effort was put into this scene to give each Trico its own unique appearance—not just in their faces, but going so far as to give them different colored feathers and various feather patterns poking out from under their armor. In another small touch, Trico’s horns are the only ones not blinking, as the rest of the group attacks. Tanaka tells us that they “used lower detail models for the tricos, especially the ones that are off in the distance.” Technically, there’s a big difference in these models compared to Trico’s usual model, but it’s hardly noticeable as the scene unfolds.

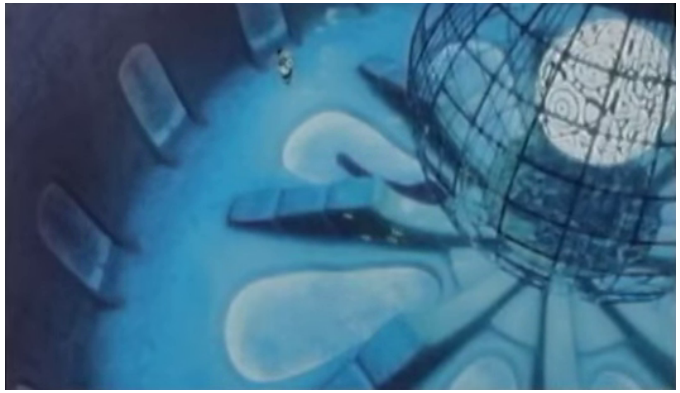


To remove any doubt, it’s not possible to control the other trico that the Boy briefly flies upon the back of. This scene does provide a great view of the Valley, though.

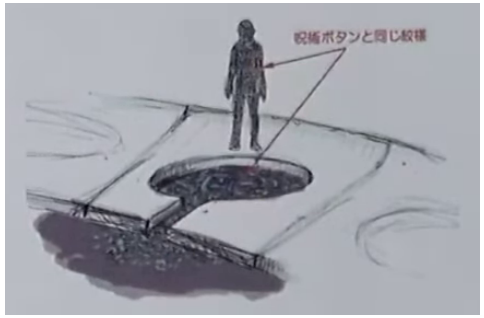


Using Trico's tail lightning, you can actually destroy the wooden 'nest' that lies around the bird-head statue (and it's supposed to look like a nest, as that's where the trico deposit their prey). This is something that was added so late in development that genDESIGN weren't even sure it was possible, as it was submitted to JAPAN Studio as a late requested fix. We all discovered the happy truth together—one of the nicer moments from our playthrough.





We were curious about the green membrane that encases the bodies that the tricos vomit up—was it stomach acid, or spit, or something else? The team actually thinks about it as something like an amniotic sac—like babies are wrapped in while in utero.



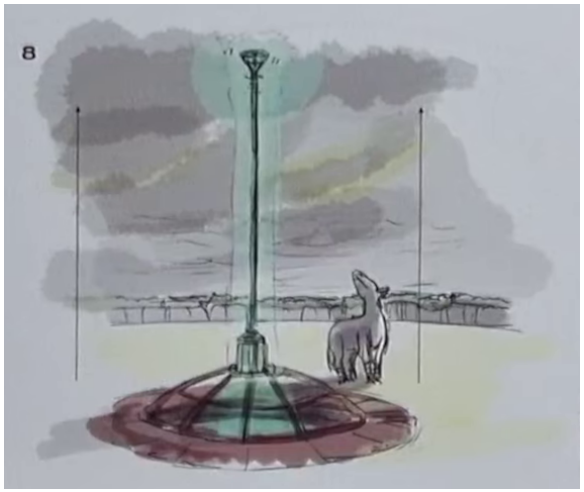
This final scene was one of the few that was never built on PlayStation®3, and the team had concerns about being able to have all of the trico creatures in one scene. Moving to PlayStation®4 was a relief, once they realized that they could now pull off the scene the way that they had wanted to.

41 | Saving The Boy

With the destruction of the Core, the Sentinel Tower's outer layer begins to collapse. The heavily wounded Trico gently grabs the Boy and takes flight, barely scraping over the canyon wall.

Trico, despite its battered state, makes it to the Boy's village, and is surrounded by scared and cautious villagers with spears after crash landing in the clearing. One of the best moments in the game lies in its final interaction, when the Boy must command Trico to fly away from his village, the only choice he has left. Tanaka tells us that this interaction was added at the "very last minute," and how happy they are that they included it (Ueda's favorite moment of the game, in fact).

During the post-credits scene, we see the Boy as an adult, perhaps now a village head of sorts ('sonchō' in Japanese). Tanaka gives us a fun anecdote about the creation of the Boy's grown-up persona: he had created two 'village head' character models—the adult Boy, and a previous village head who's shown when the Boy is first captured as a child. The latter looked "too cool," so they ended up using his model for the adult Boy instead, and made the other the "less cool-looking" version.



The antenna here was designed to ensure players wouldn't just assume that destroying it was the only possible way to proceed. Destroying the top of it leaves enough intact to lure the player downward.

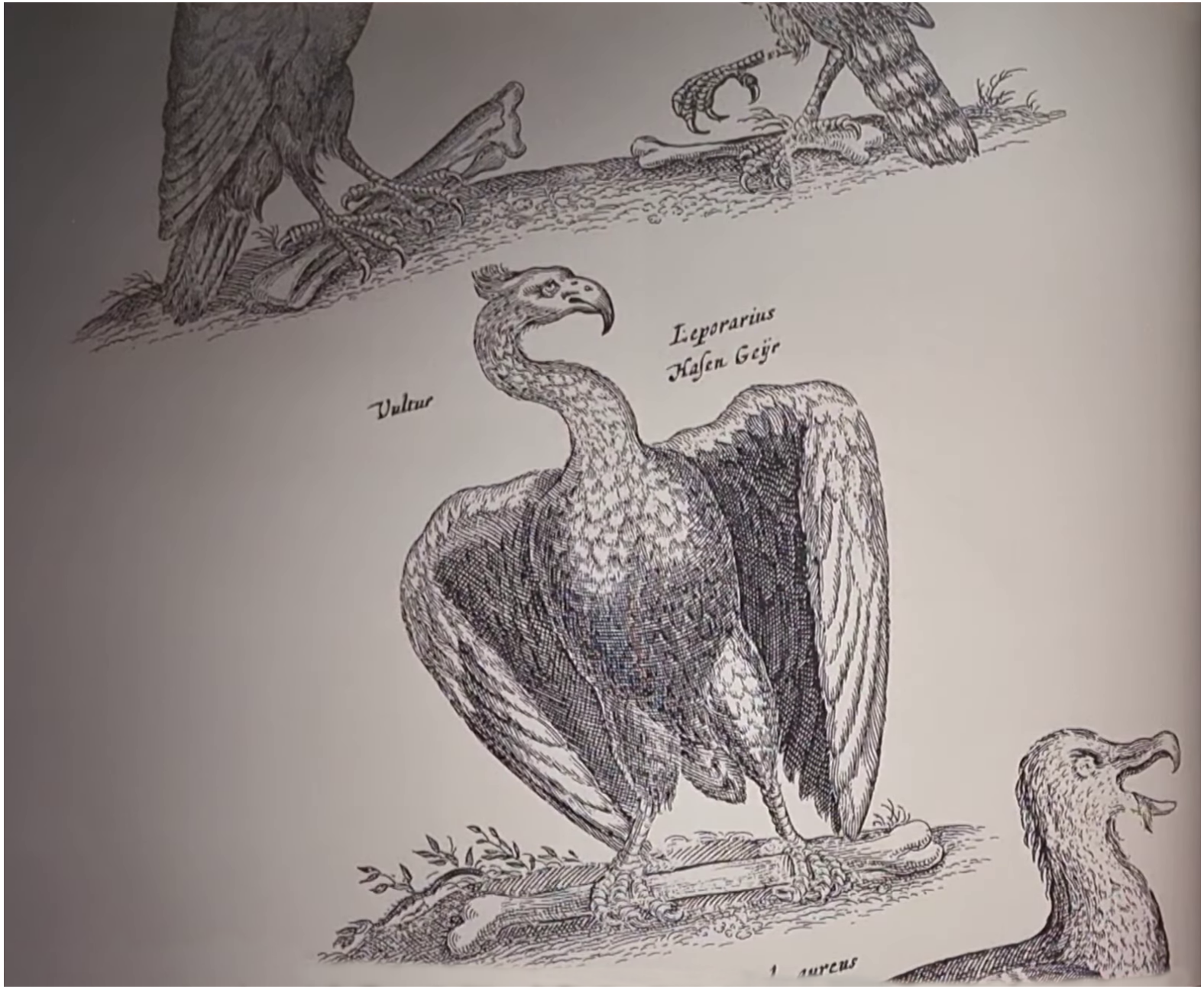
The bottom image here shows the final show of the darkened cave after the credits. You can press the Circle button here to make Trico's horns glow—presumably confirming that this is the same Trico that the Boy journeyed with many years before, and that it still shares its connection with the Mirror.

Interestingly, the sepia-toned 'flashback' scenes that roll during the credits are actually running in real time, loaded into the game engine—not just a pre-recorded movie—so they reflect the costume the Boy is wearing and the state of his tattoos.

While it may appear that there are multiple endings, depending on what you see in the cave at the very end, there's actually only one. The plan was that the clarity at which you can see the sets of trico eyes depends on the same metric that changes the Boy's tattoos: how often you've been caught by the Yoroi throughout the game. But that was removed at the last minute, and the final scene is now always the same.

If there are additional mysterious to find in *The Last Guardian* beyond the pages of this book, it wasn't for lack of trying—we peppered the team with every question we could think of during our playthrough, from mundane logistic queries to crackpot fan theories.

We ask if they ever considered having Trico die at the end of the game, knowing that many fans had predicted that? "That option was never there," Ueda says. "I came up with the plot knowing I wanted an ending other than a death." As we watch Trico heroically fly the unconscious Boy back to his village, we asked the team who they considered to be the protagonist of the game. "Probably the Boy," Tanaka responds, "though Trico will no doubt be the more popular one of the two."

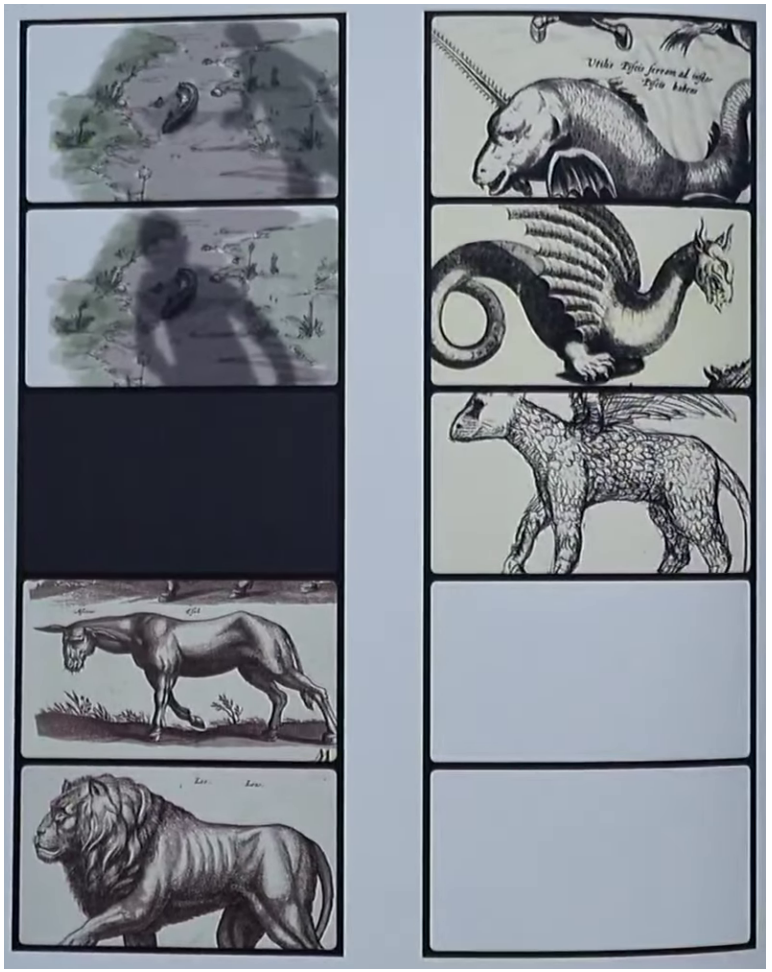

Leporarius
Hasen Geyr
Vultur

SKETCHING A **STORY** CHAPTER | 04

Storyboards | **Setting the Scene**

Part 1

The following pages present the storyboards genDESIGN created to plan *The Last Guardian*'s cutscenes. Players will tend to think of the game as having six major cutscenes: Those for the opening, the first antenna, the second antenna, the arrival of the tricos, the ending, and the post-credits scene, but when planning the cutscenes the team split some of these into smaller parts. The storyboards for each of these are shown here in their entirety, accompanied by a summary of the story that each scene tells. You'll also notice the occasional screenshot from the final scenes, included both for comparison and to point out smaller details that could easily be missed.



The red arrow here points out that the Mirror is found near the very center of the village.

These illustrations are primarily the work of John Jonston (1603-1675), author of several bestiaries such as *Historiae naturalis de quadrupedibus libri*, 'Book of the natural history of quadrupeds.' The team had borrowed a book of his illustrations which Ueda wanted to use, and added etching effects to a 3D model of Trico to make it fit in with the rest.

Cutscene | **The Awakening**

Part 1 **Shots:** 7 | **Time:** 86.0sec
Part 2 **Shots:** 10 | **Time:** 47.0sec

A faintly glowing metal disc lies half-buried in the dirt, a strange energy emanating from within. As the camera pulls out a little, wind rustles through the adjacent grass, and the laughter of children playing can be heard. A human silhouette steps up to the Mirror, hesitating for a moment, before the scene cuts away to a simple black title card for *The Last Guardian*—a quiet-but-curious piano melody swelling softly behind it.

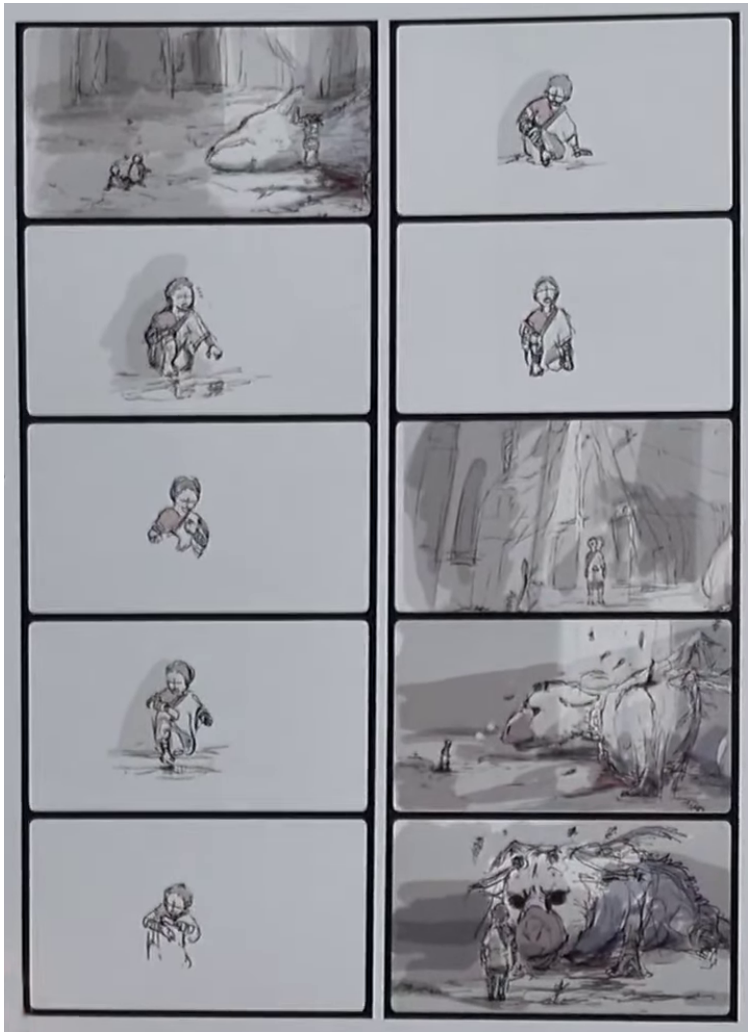
Next, we see anatomical illustrations of animals, as in a textbook: bees, ants, beetles, birds, and bats, then dogs, cats, goats, armadillos, a giraffe. Then things get a bit more fantastical: a unicorn, a griffin, some sort of hydra, a phoenix. And finally, Trico—a conceptual combination of several of the creatures shown previously, while at the same time very much a taxonomy all its own.

Feathers lie on the ground, water drips, and a small plant grows in the sunlight. A familiar chain begins to shift in a large hole. “Be among the chosen ones…” a narrator quotes in a strange language. “In my dream I was flying. Flying through the darkness…” A robed Boy awakes next to a slumbering beast, far from home and covered in strange new markings. The Boy and Trico are united, an unlikely pair with an immediate, common goal of escape.

This small plant, at the same stage of growth as in the ‘Capturing the Boy’ cutscene, affirms that very little time has passed between Trico being placed in the cave and the Boy awakening.

Part 1

Cutscene | **The First Antenna**



Shots: 13 | **Time:** 45.5sec

When Trico and the Boy discover a room caged in glowing green-blue material, a strange antenna is triggered and seems to broadcast a signal. This appears to take control of Trico, possessing the creature to snap for its companion and then to swallow him whole. The semi-conscious Boy is hit with frantic visions, like a fever dream: images and fragments appear and disappear in quick succession, but a complete picture is impossible to grasp. Eventually, the Boy awakens in a sweat, as Trico lies sleeping beside him.

This scene is a perfect example of just how well the final cutscenes capture the tone and framing of the illustrations. The Boy's poses are recreated perfectly, down to the smallest details.

Cutscene | **Capturing The Boy**

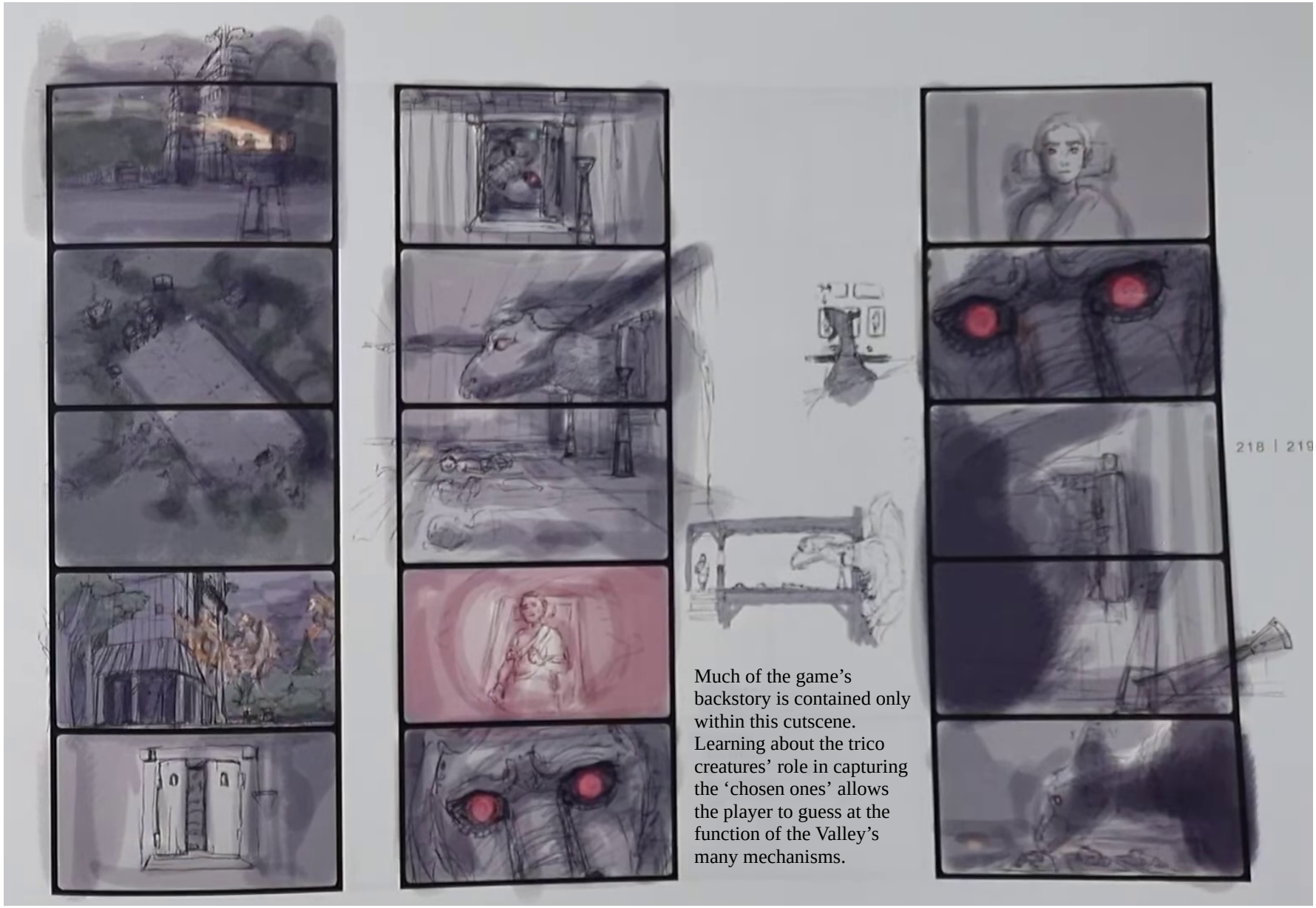
Part 1 **Shots:** 44 | **Time:** 248.0sec
Part 2 **Shots:** 30 | **Time:** 192.5sec

We’re deep into the adventure by the time the pair reach another antenna room and we learn more about the true origins of their intertwined story. We see a small village on an overcast night, as several children sleep on mats in one of the buildings while a glowing turquoise butterfly flutters around them.

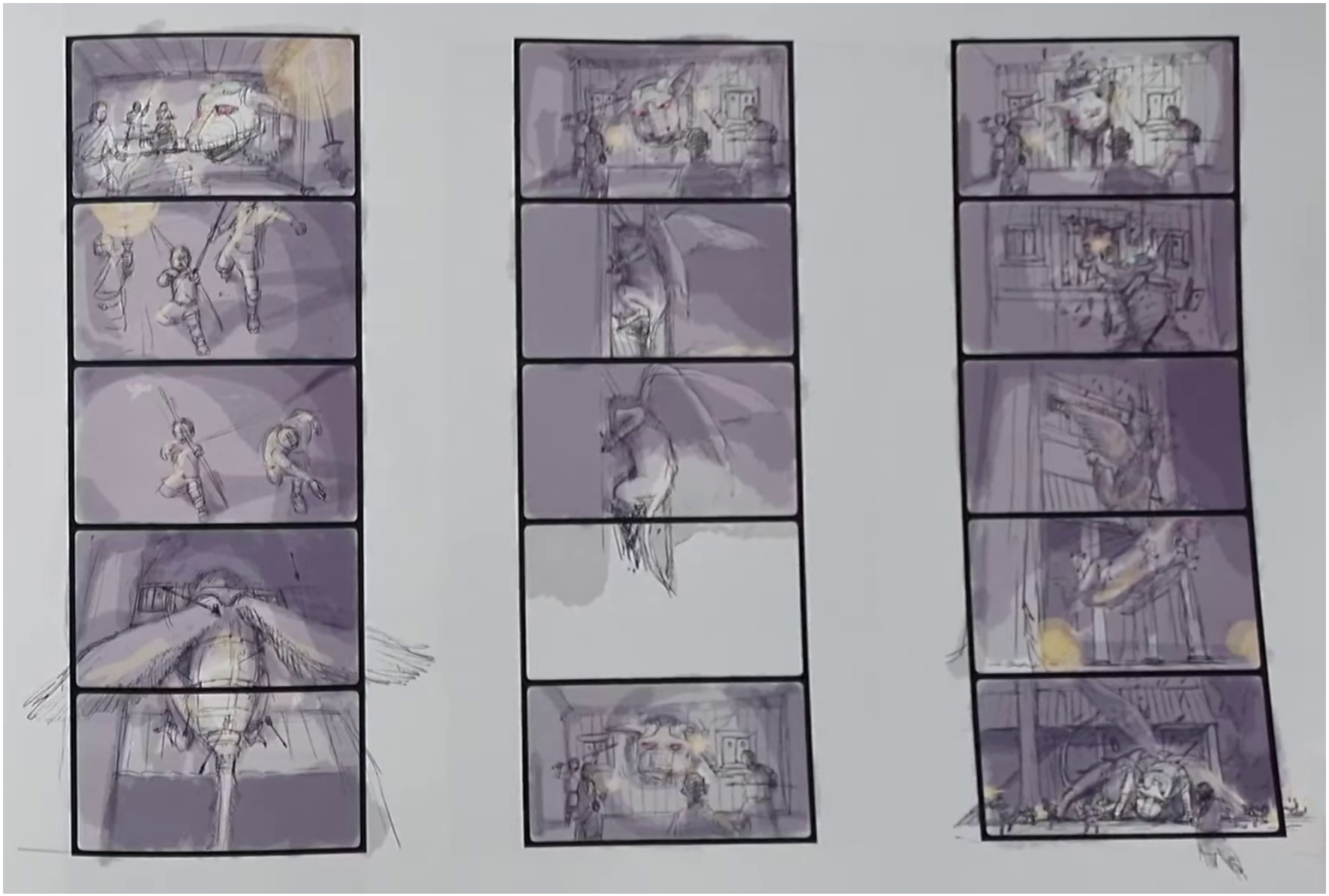
The clearing that houses the village is but a small gap on a massive blanket of forest, one that Trico soars rapidly over before dropping down to alight silently on the building within which the children sleep. It pokes a large, armored face through an unlatched window, eyes glowing a fierce red. The Boy sleeps closest to the window, stirring restlessly before opening his eyes, transfixed by the beast looming over him.

The blue butterflies flitting in and out of the frame above the squirming Boy were included to give a stronger impression of the Boy being chosen.

Part 1



Much of the game's backstory is contained only within this cutscene. Learning about the trico creatures' role in capturing the 'chosen ones' allows the player to guess at the function of the Valley's many mechanisms.

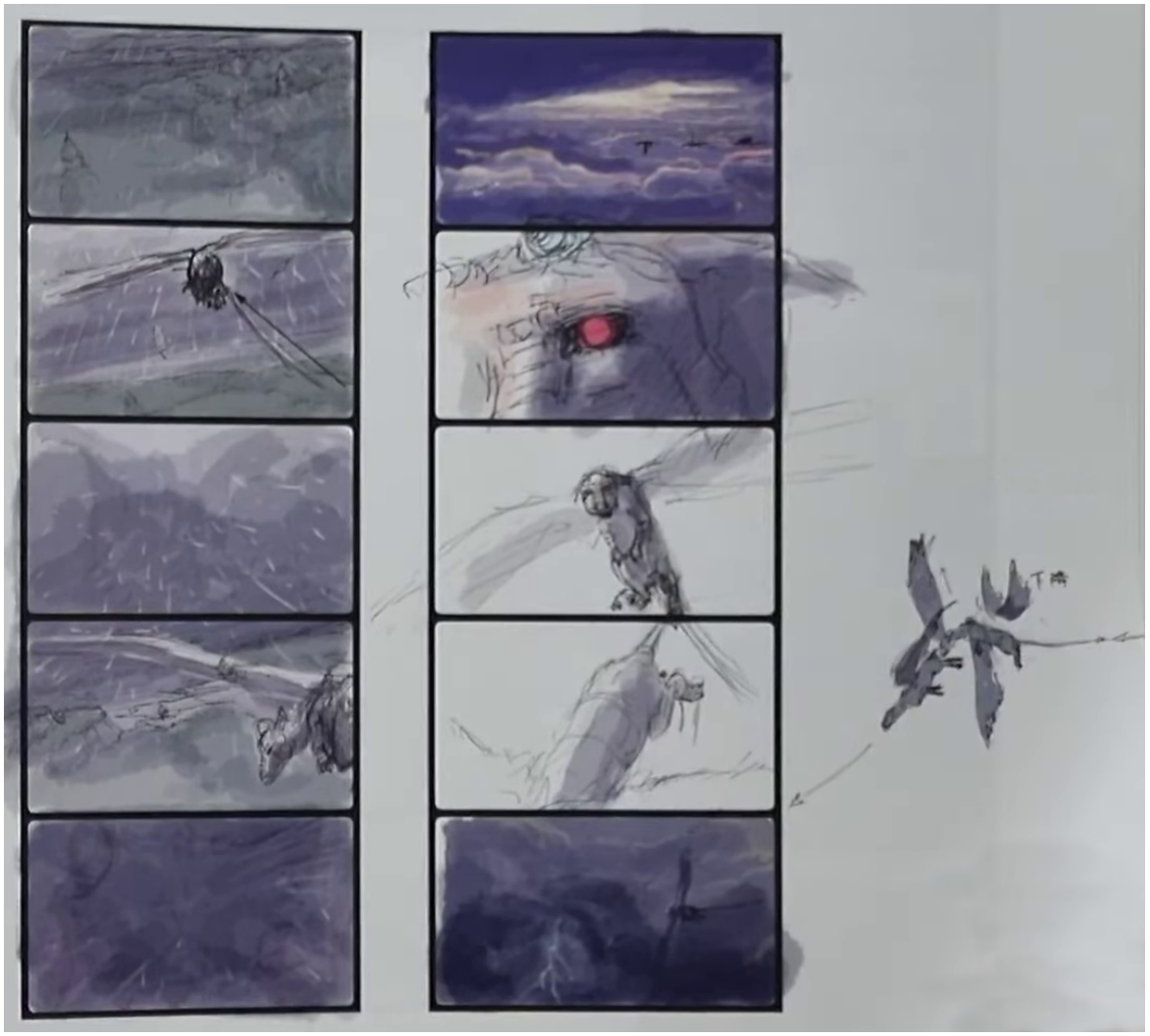


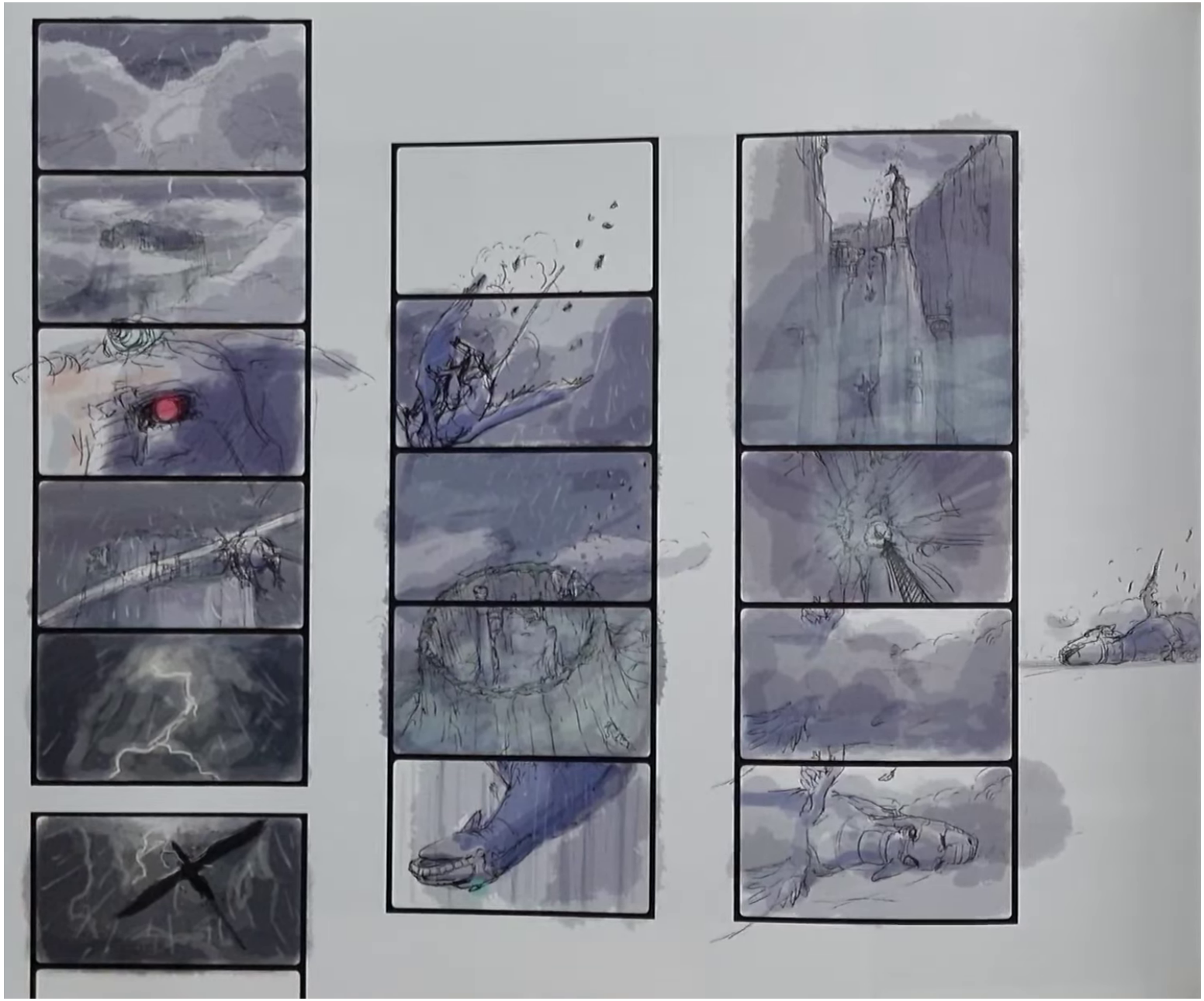
Trico knocks down a nearby brazier, before turning its attention back towards the Boy, slurping down most of his body without a fuss. Before he can finish though, a woman enters the room holding a lantern, and screams at the sight of Trico devouring a child. The commotion wakes the other children, who quickly scurry away from the threat, while alarms are raised around the village. Men soon swarm the room from within and others gather outside, harrying Trico with spears and burning torches. Trico yanks itself free from the building, roaring in protest of the attack but eventually yielding to the spears, a running start carrying it up and away into the night sky. The villagers mass in disbelief, as an elder ruminates once again: “Be among the chosen ones…”

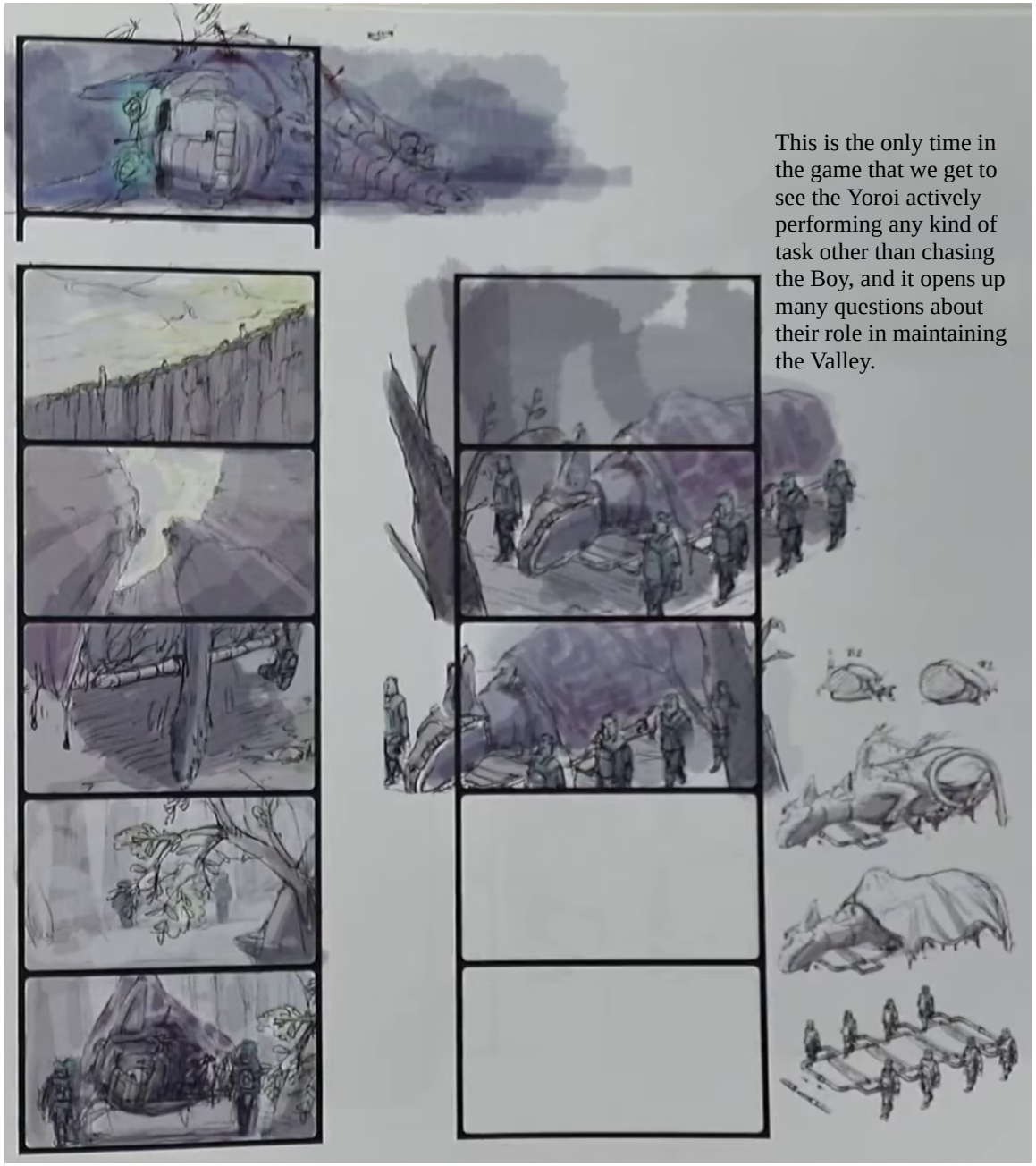
Trico flies a great distance as night turns into dawn, and then becomes night once more. A focused journey home, but one not without beauty and peace amongst the clouds. As it approaches the Valley, Trico is struck by lightning, severing its tail and sending its body spiraling down to the crater far below. A painful crash landing against the rocks leaves Trico battered but alive. Both of its glowing green horns cracked off in the fall.

The storyboards for Part 2 of this cutscene show 30 separate shots, but in the final game there are only 28.

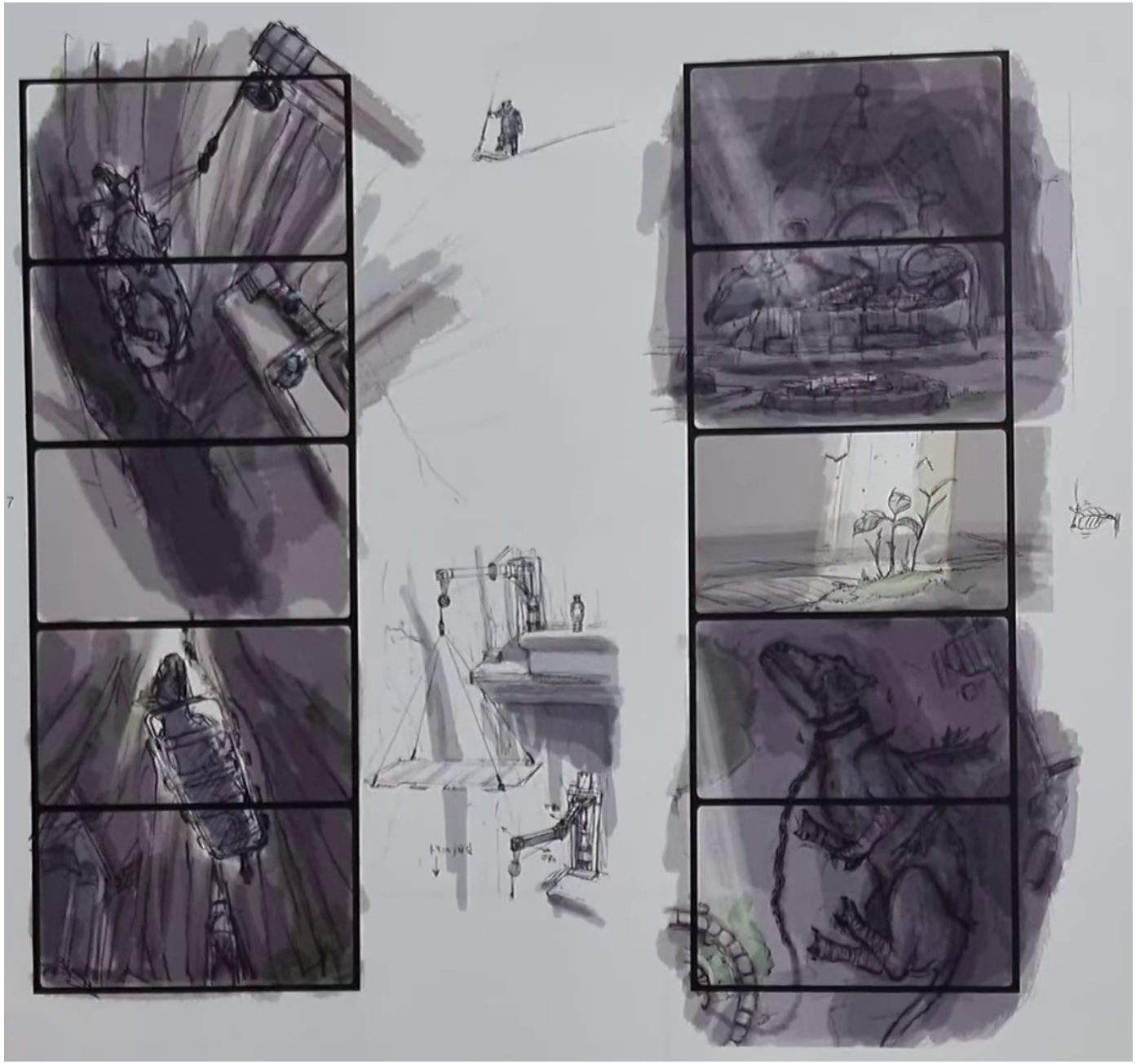
Part 1





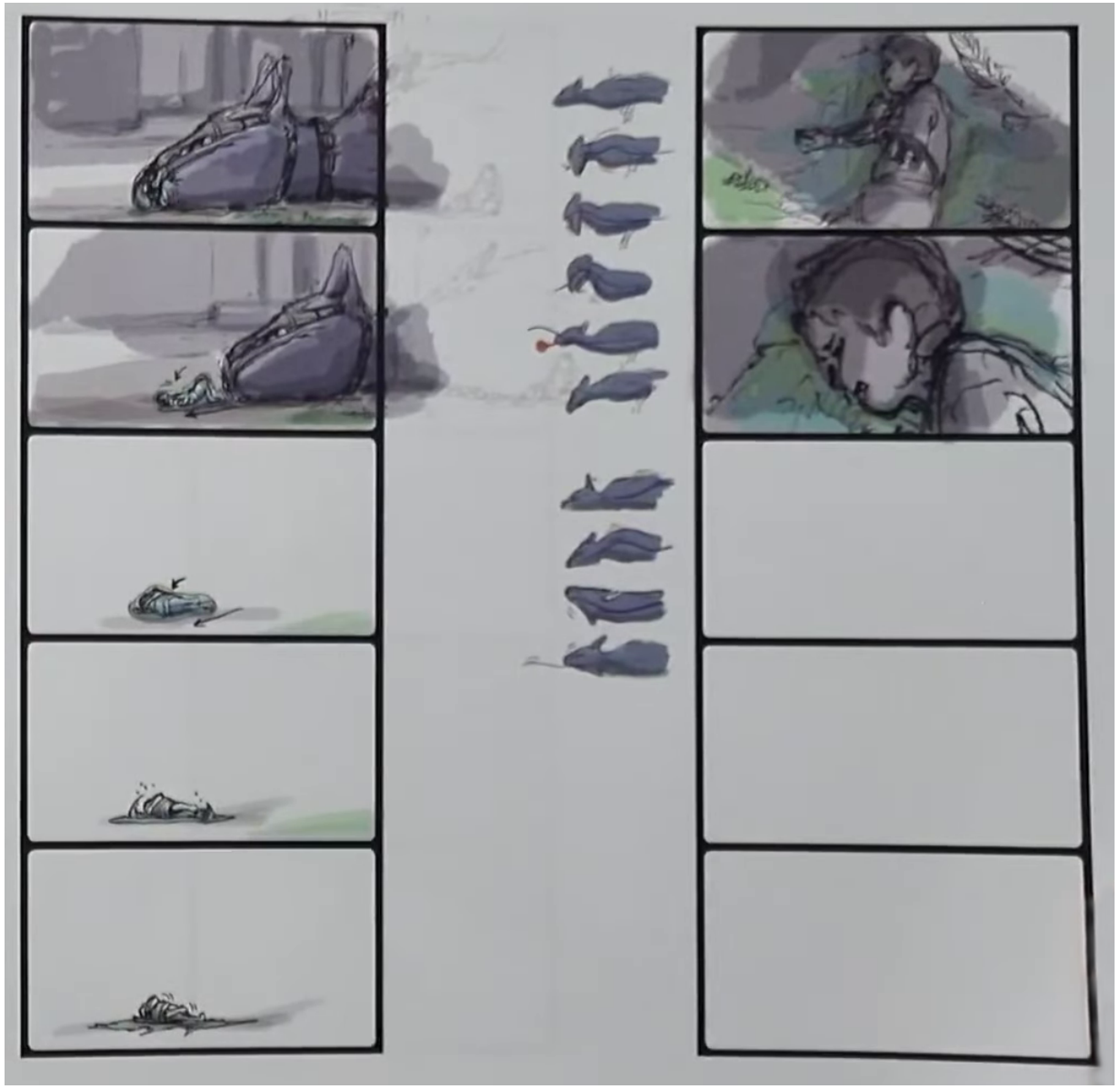


This is the only time in the game that we get to see the Yoroi actively performing any kind of task other than chasing the Boy, and it opens up many questions about their role in maintaining the Valley.



Much design thought went into the Yoroi's roles as 'caretakers' to the tricos. The illustrations attached to these storyboards show them clearly working together as a construction team, but only the outlines of this idea remain visible in the final version of the scene.

Some time after, the Yoroi march in formation, carrying Trico’s body on a large stretcher of sorts, blanketed, before lowering it down into a cave and chaining it to the floor. Once left alone, Trico pants and then heaves, spitting up a green amniotic bubble that houses the body of the Boy. The bubble pops, and the Boy’s tattoos glow brightly as he stirs awake—bringing us full circle to the point at which the events of the game begin.

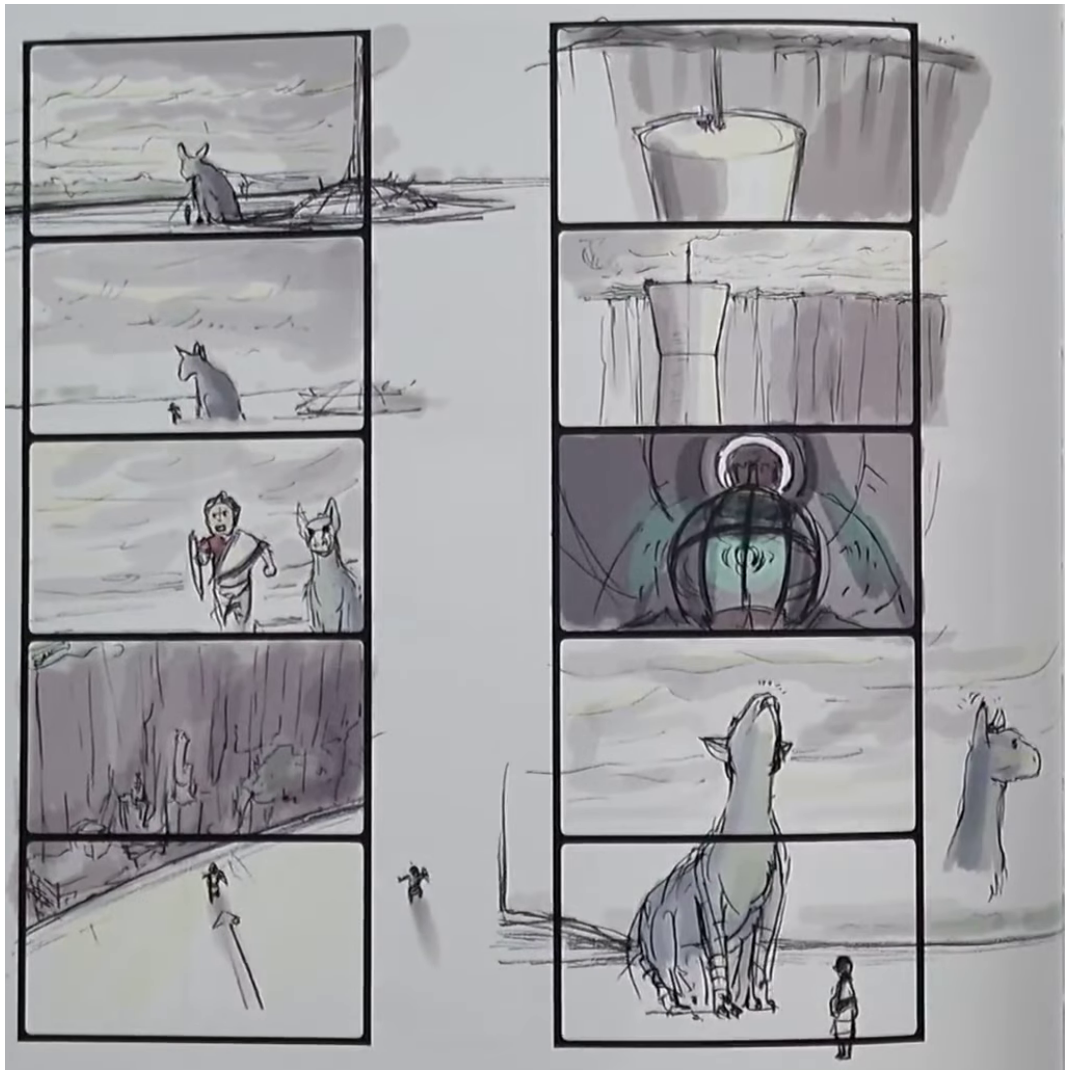


Cutscene | **Atop the Tower**

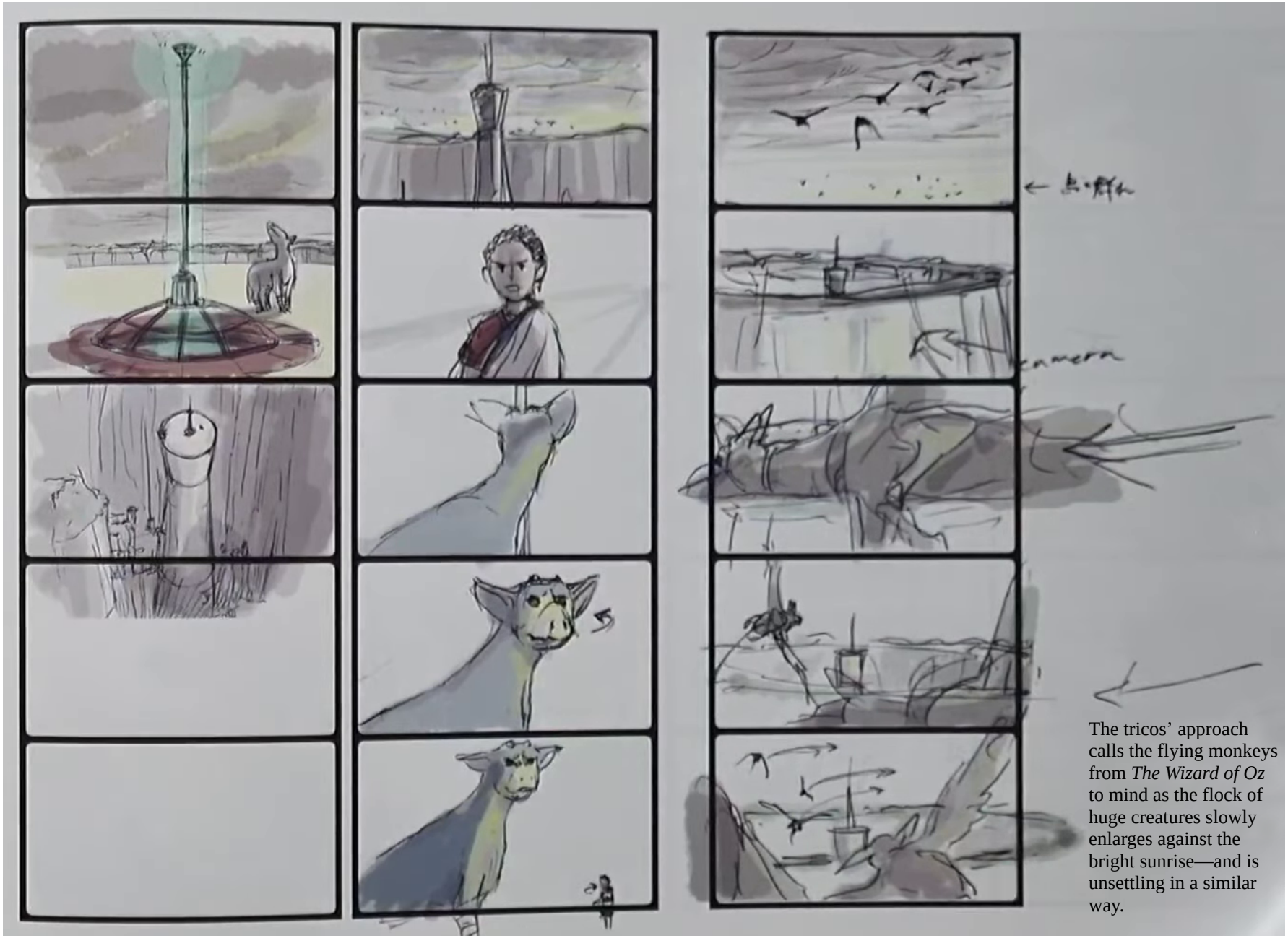
Part 1 **Shots:** 28 | **Time:** 182.0sec
Part 2 **Shots:** 4 | **Time:** 35.0sec
Part 3 **Shots:** 5 | **Time:** 34.5sec

Just as Trico and the Boy are enjoying a peaceful final moment together in the warm morning sun at the top of the Tower, the Core sends a signal out into the atmosphere from the master antenna, calling the other tricos back from their hunt. One by one they land on the roof and walk over to the bird head statue, regurgitating their prey into its open mouth—green amniotic sacs like Trico once carried the Boy in, containing other human forms, patterned head to toe with glowing green symbols. The statue rewards them with a glowing barrel, blasting it high into the air for them to fight over.

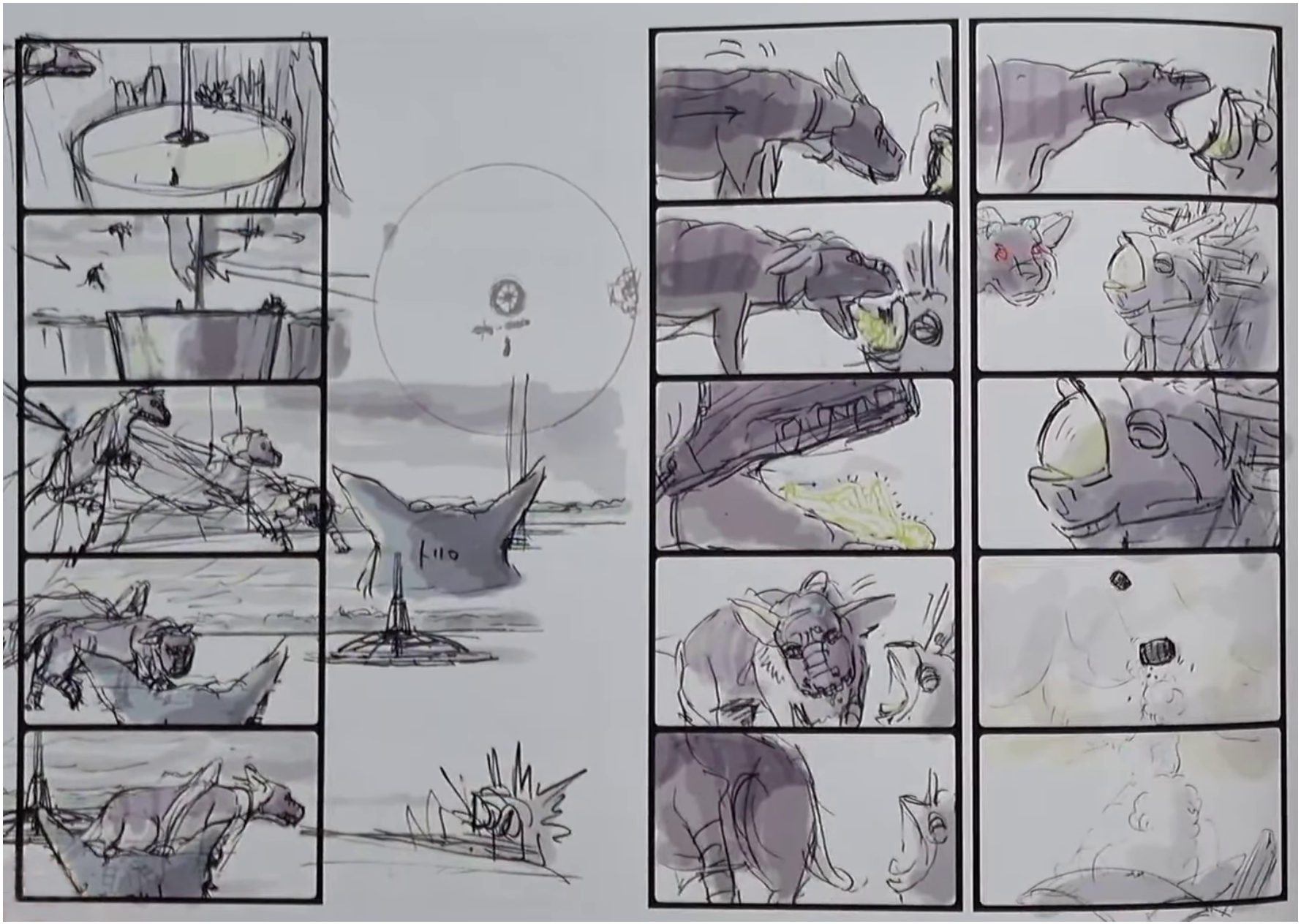
Part 1

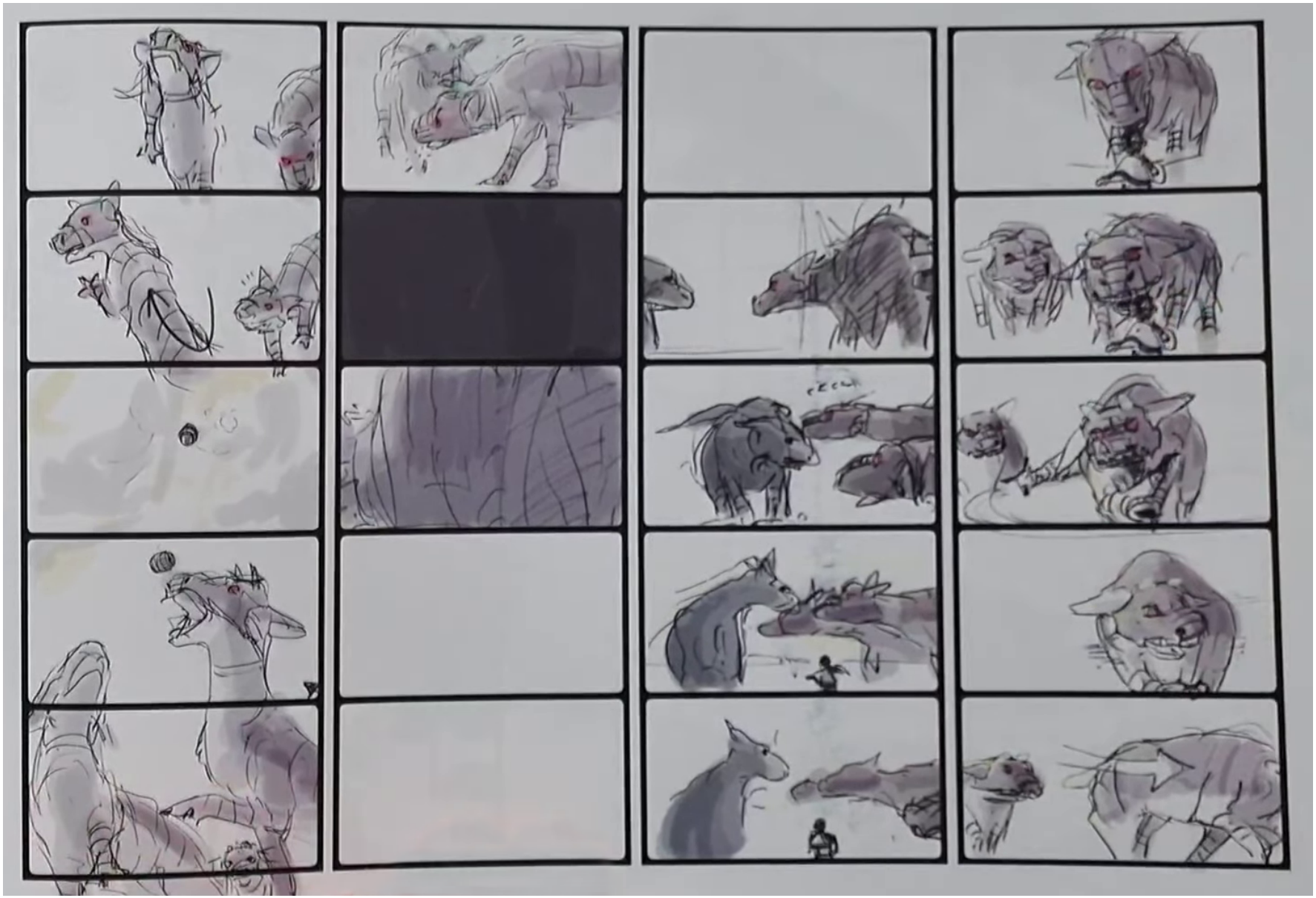


Steam pours forth from the central area at the top of the tower and the antenna begins to emit a powerful signal, as Trico and the Boy can only look on, entirely unaware of what's coming. The storyboards for Part 1 of this cutscene show 28 shots, but in the final game there are 27.



The tricos' approach calls the flying monkeys from *The Wizard of Oz* to mind as the flock of huge creatures slowly enlarges against the bright sunrise—and is unsettling in a similar way.

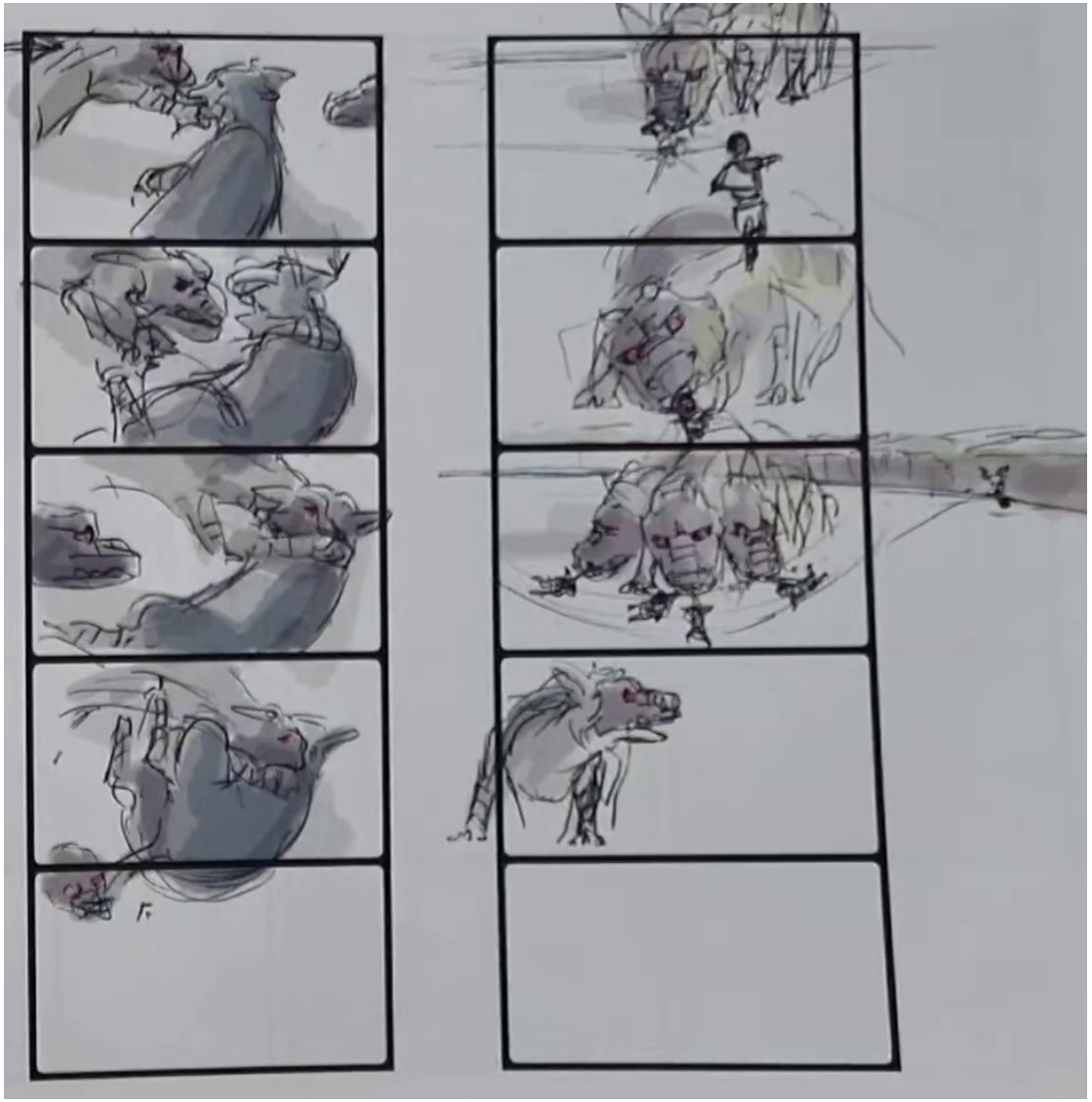




The group of tricos eventually take notice of the Boy, swatting him aside (and sending the Mirror rolling away), before Trico comes to his rescue and begins to fight them off. It's soon overwhelmed though, amidst a crowd of armored foes, their horns glowing brightly under the Core's control. As the Boy tries to grab the Mirror he is knocked from the Tower, landing on the back of a circling trico, who takes him on a short ride reminiscent of riding the two flying Colossi in *Shadow of the Colossus*.

Watching the tricos' behavior is fascinating here, as they land like birds and then make a completely natural transition to the feral, pack-like stand-off with Trico.

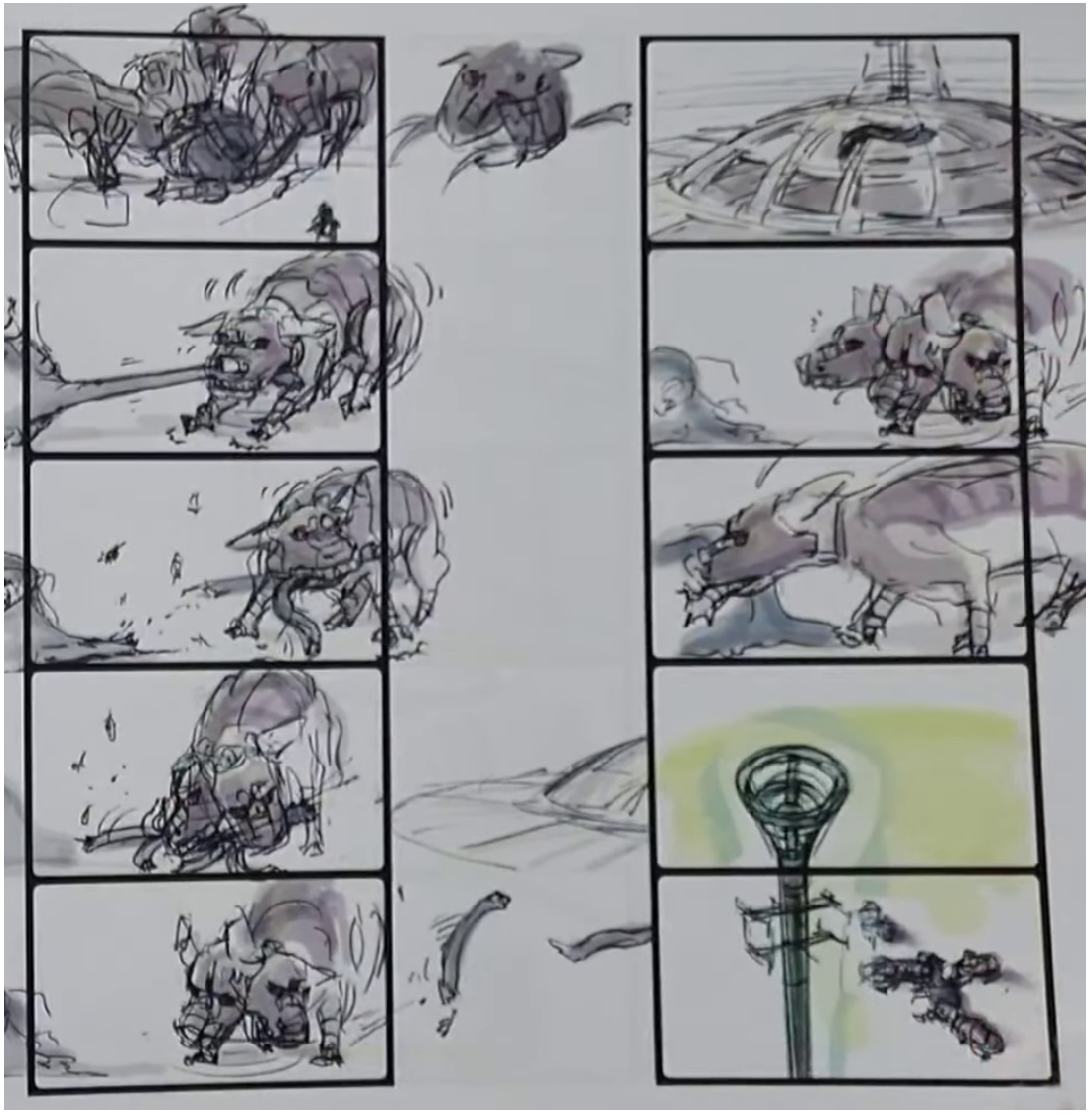
Part 1



Part 3

One of the attackers rips off Trico's newly regrown tail (perhaps the most painful moment of the story to witness), tossing it down into the room that houses the Core. The player must then solve the final 'puzzle' of the game, finding and using the Mirror to summon forth electricity from the severed tail, destroying the Core's metal enclosure, and then eventually the Core itself.

This shot of the severed tail falling into the fan is crucial in luring the player down towards the Core for the final stand-off.



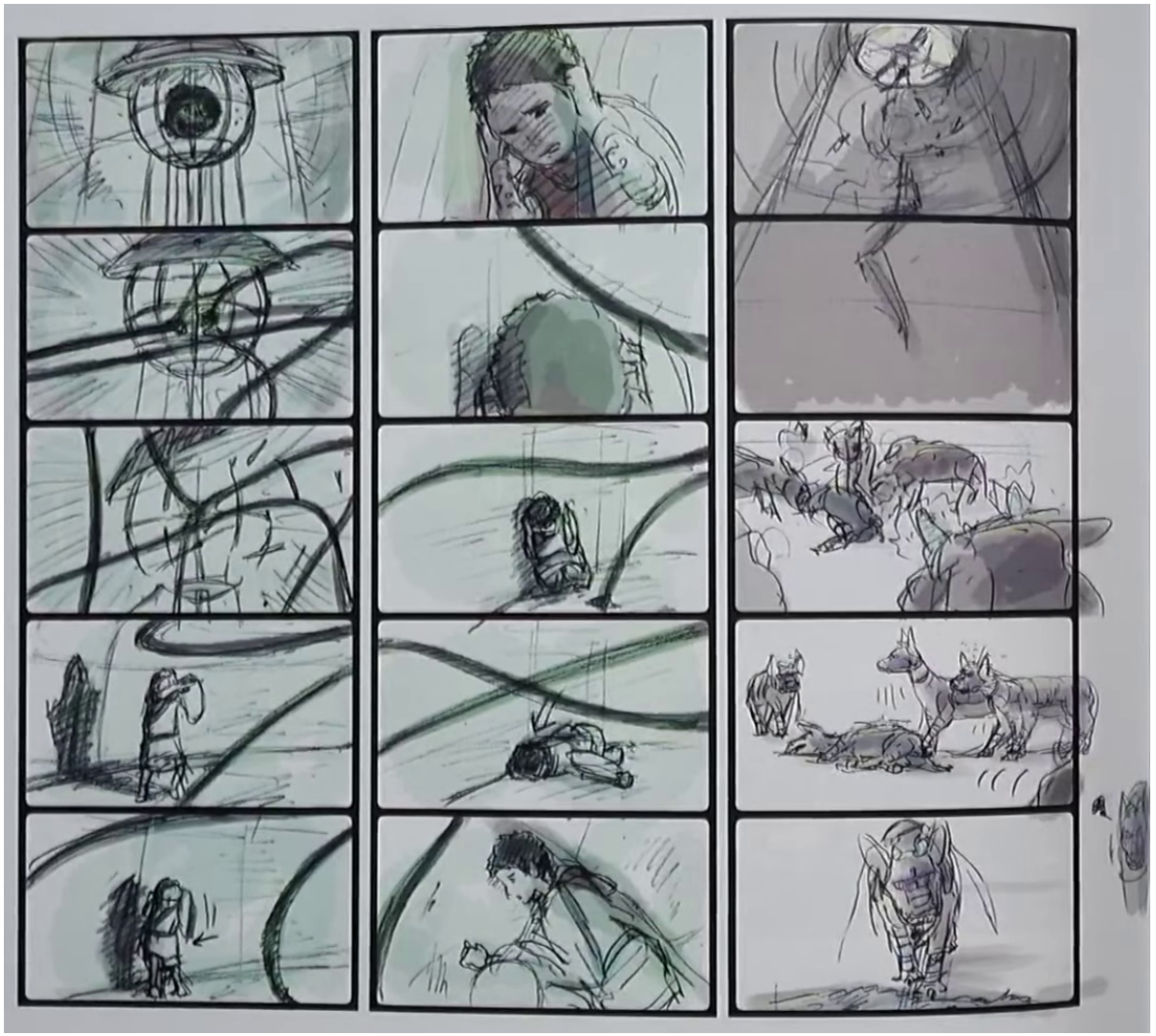
Cutscene | **Saving The Boy**

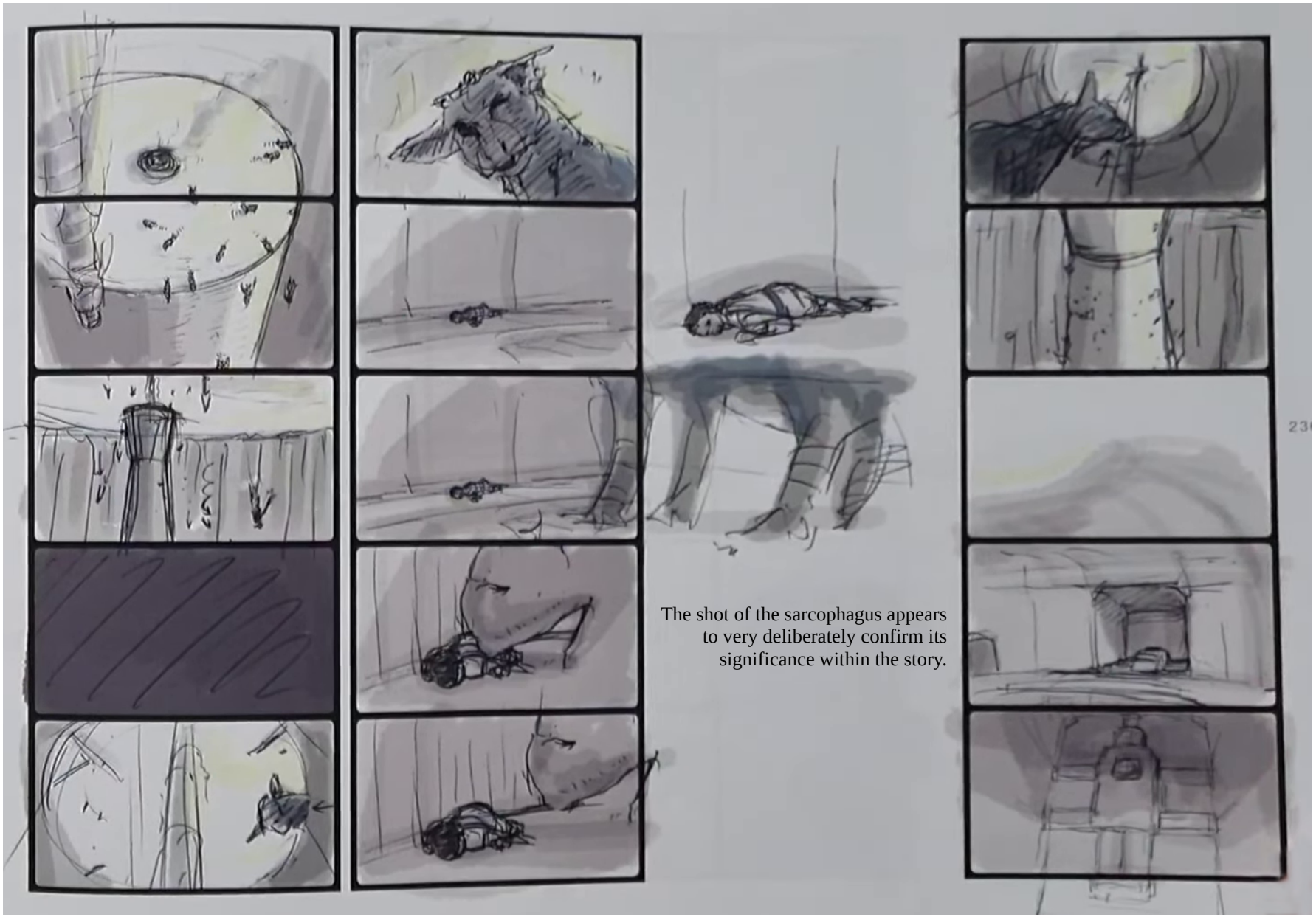
Part 1 **Shots:** 42 | **Time:** 282.0sec
Part 2 **Shots:** 22 | **Time:** 140.5sec

The Core explodes in a storm of flying green symbols, pummeling the Boy against the wall. Its control over the other tricos is broken though, as they back away from attacking Trico, shaking their heads in confusion, or simply falling out of the sky like dying birds.

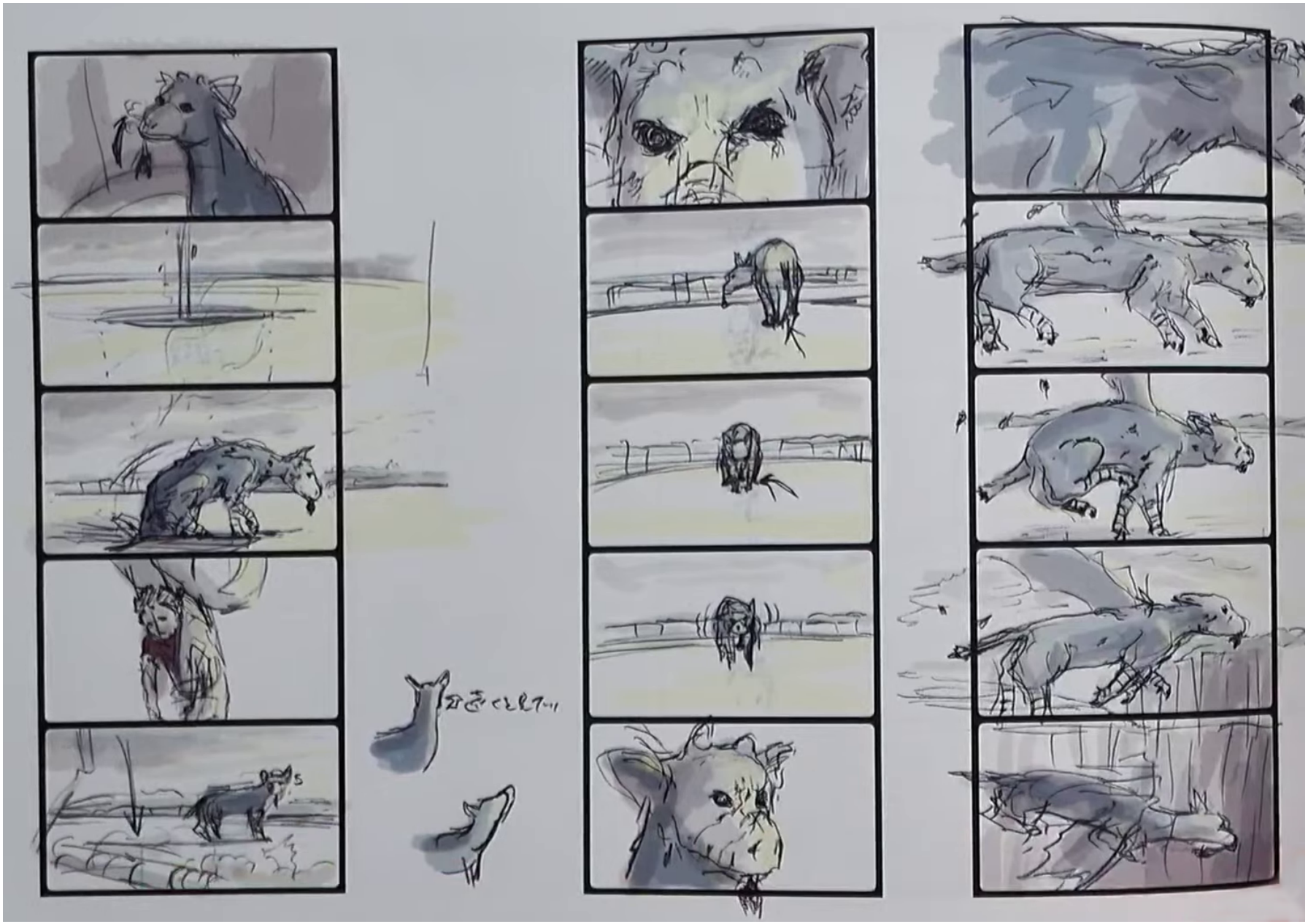
We see parts of the Valley begin to crumble, including a clearly very intentional shot of the mirror room falling apart, bits of it flaking down on the strange sarcophagus. Alive but the worse for wear, Trico manages to grab the unconscious Boy from the room, climb back up to the top of the Tower, and take a running start before flying up and away—finally—towards some sort of freedom. The pair pass by the other trico that they encountered throughout their journey, its face armor shed, as it climbs up a nearby tower and roars at them (perhaps a parting encouragement). Barely making it onto the lip of the crater, Trico swallows the Boy once more, and takes off into the dawn.

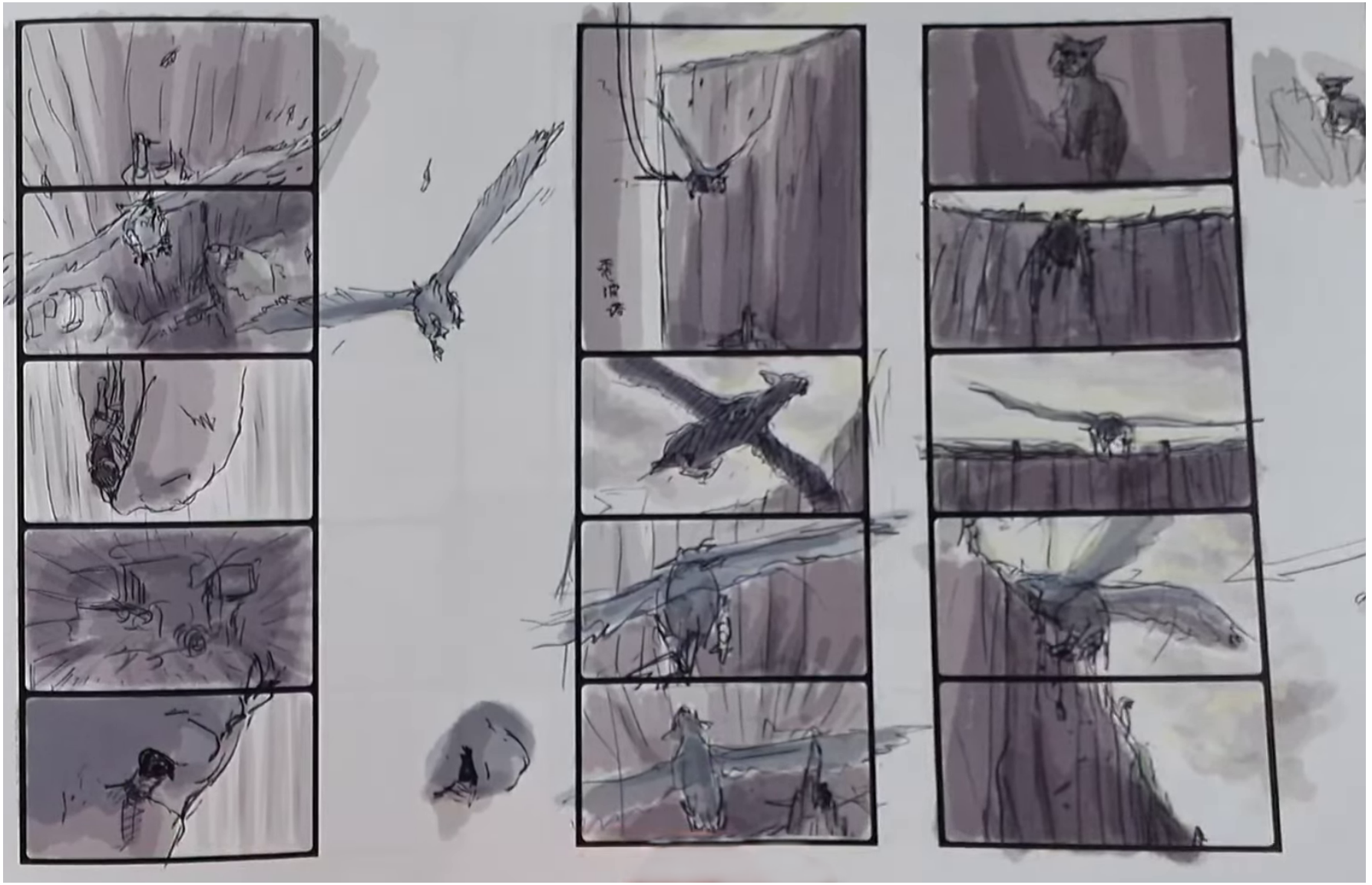
Part 1

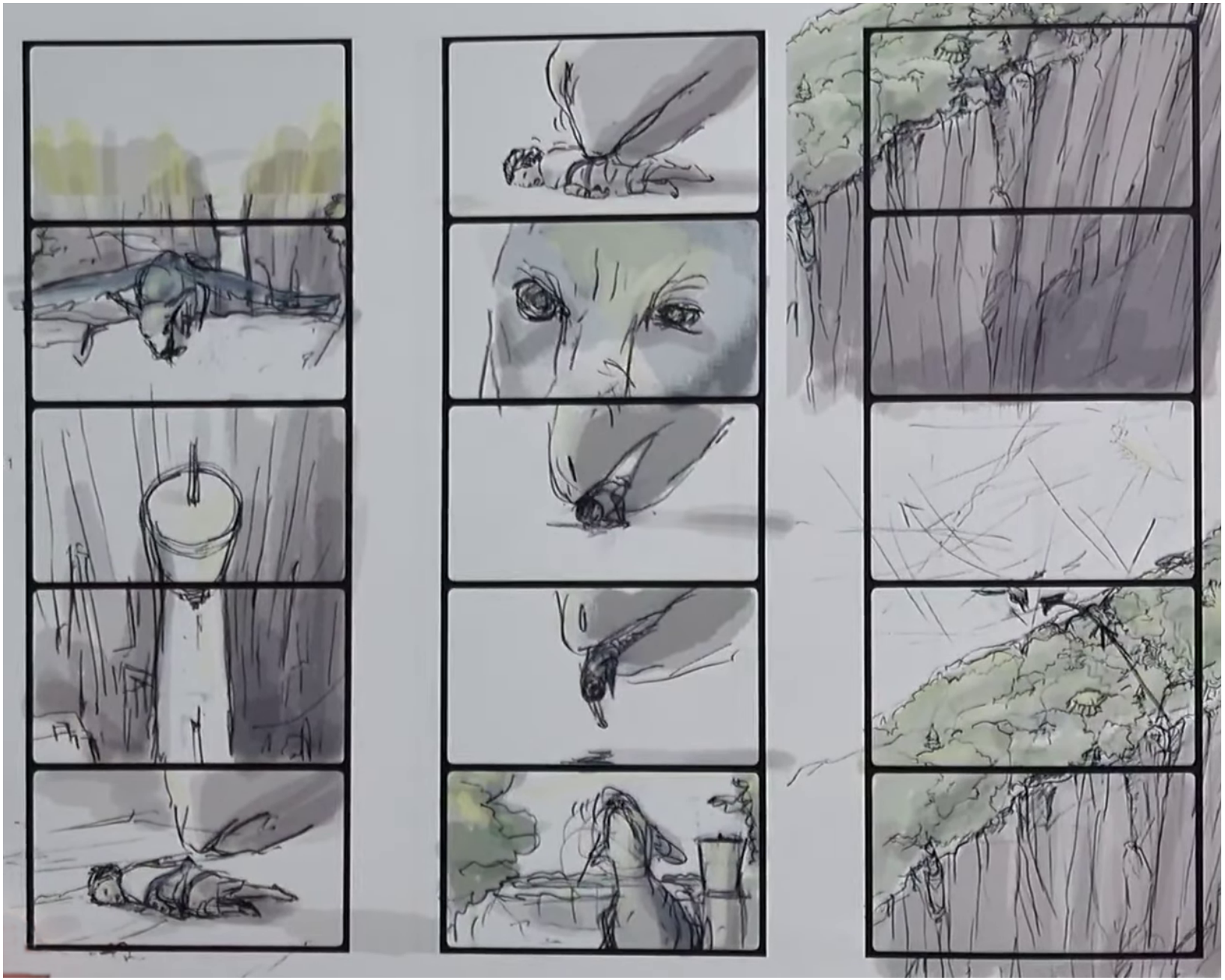




The shot of the sarcophagus appears to very deliberately confirm its significance within the story.





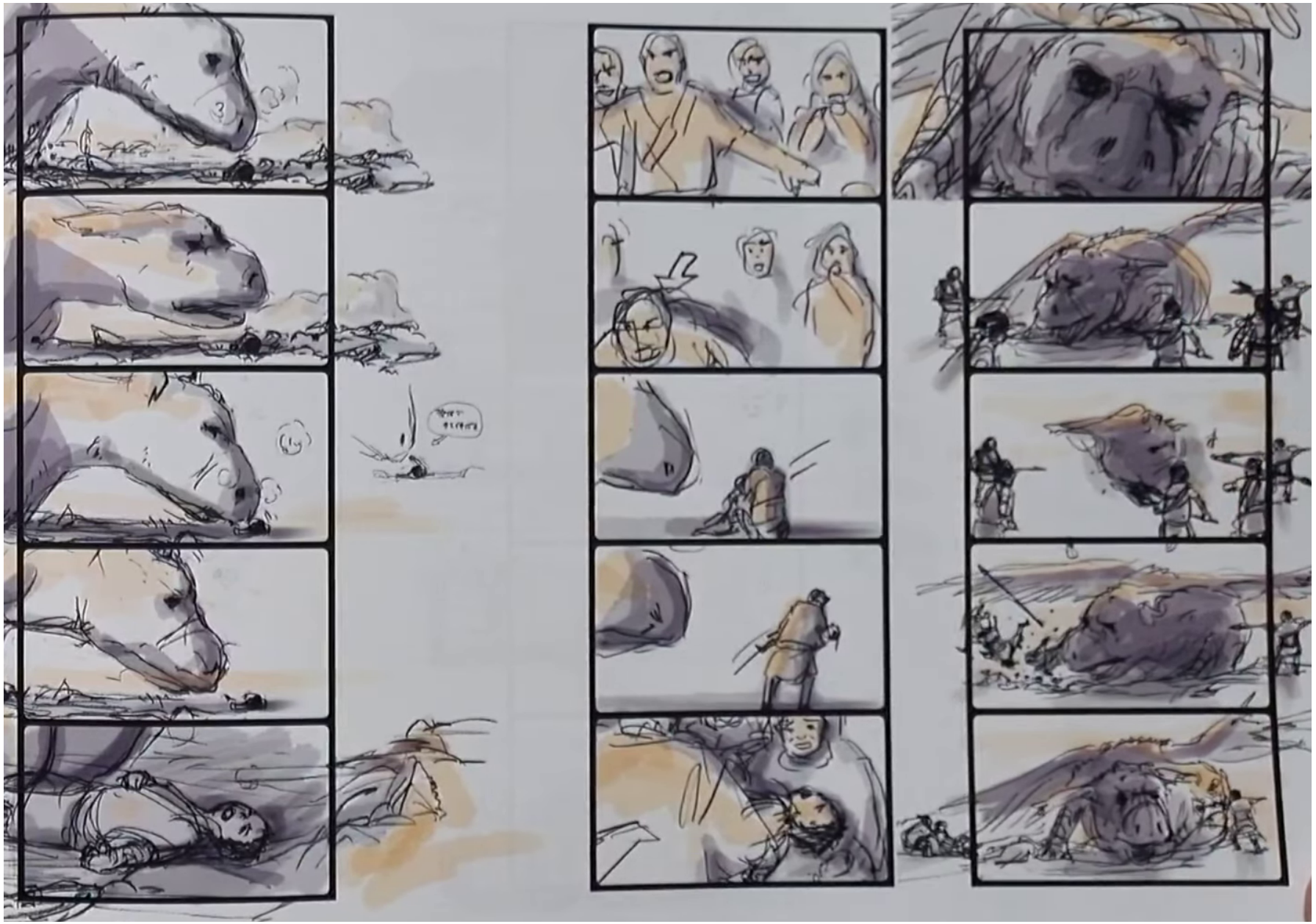


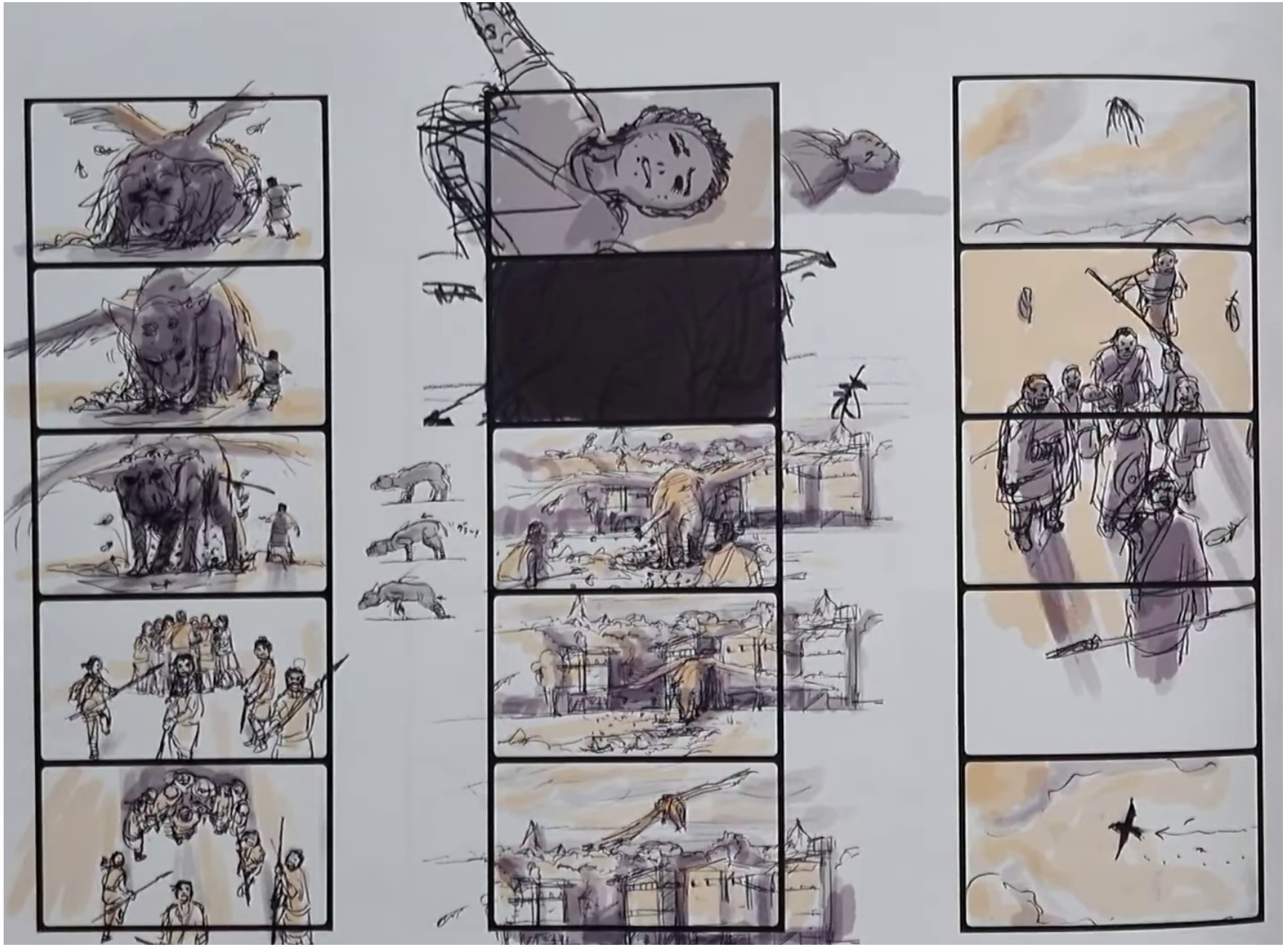
Part 2

Trico crash-lands in the clearing of the Boy's village in a puff of feathers and dirt, and is soon surrounded by armed villagers waiting for its next move. It spits up the Boy soon enough (who is rousing, weakly), nudging him gently towards his people with its nose. A man gathers him in his arms, as Trico roars at the villagers around it, refusing to leave the Boy. In a final, beautiful moment of interaction, the Boy—and the player—must command Trico to leave, the only choice left to save the injured creature.

The brutal crash landing in the finished cutscene captures the sequence of illustrations perfectly, condensing them into a brief instant.

Having the Boy, via the player, give Trico the command to leave was a last minute addition, so it doesn’t appear in the storyboards in this form.



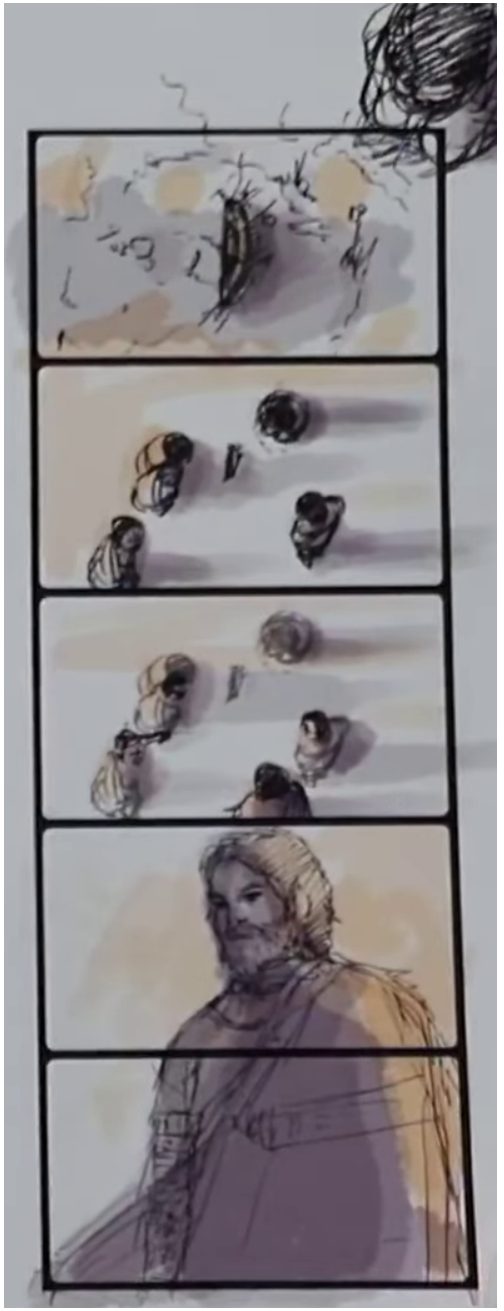


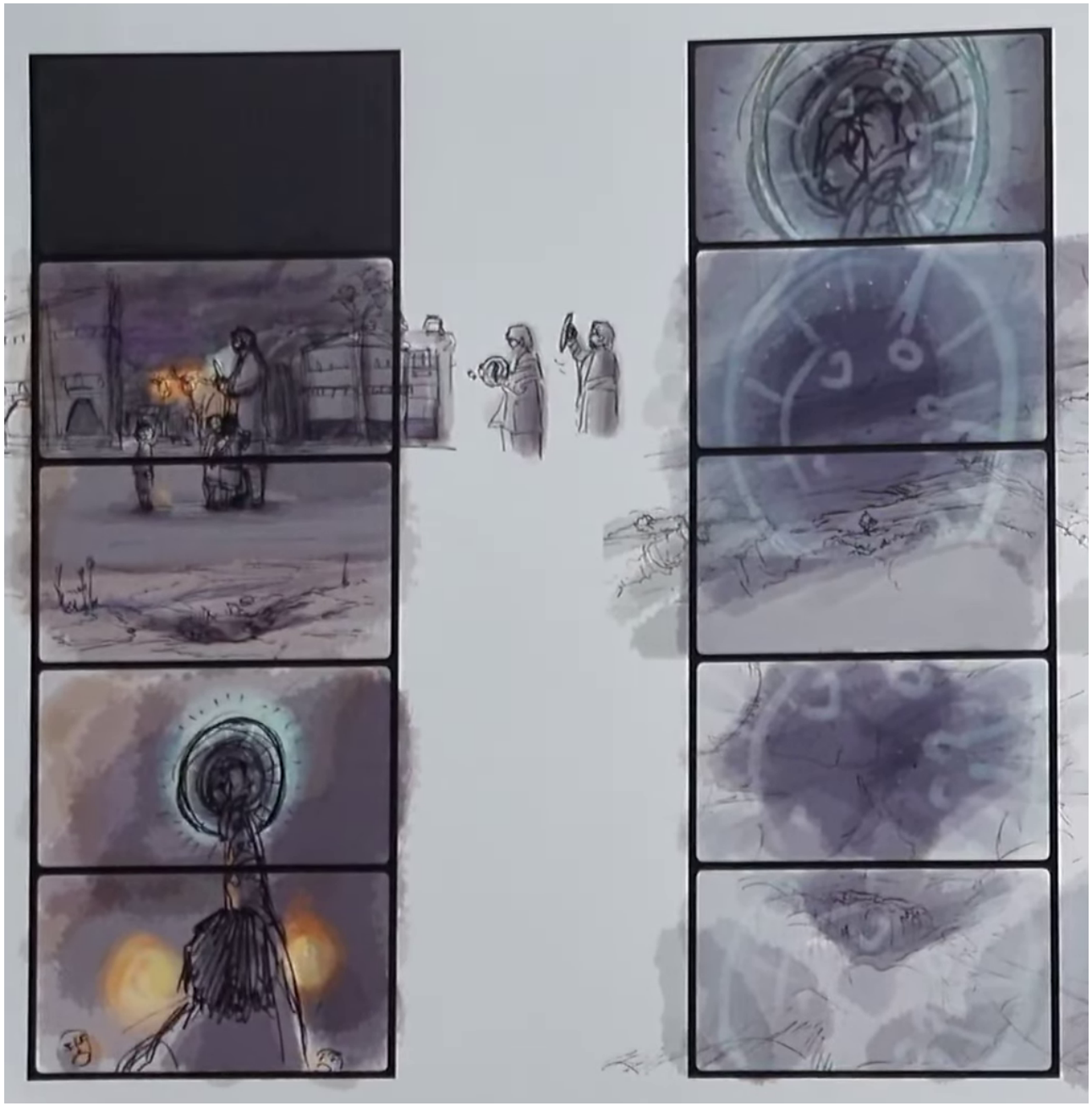
Cutscene | **Many Years Later**

Shots: 4 | **Time:** 107.0sec

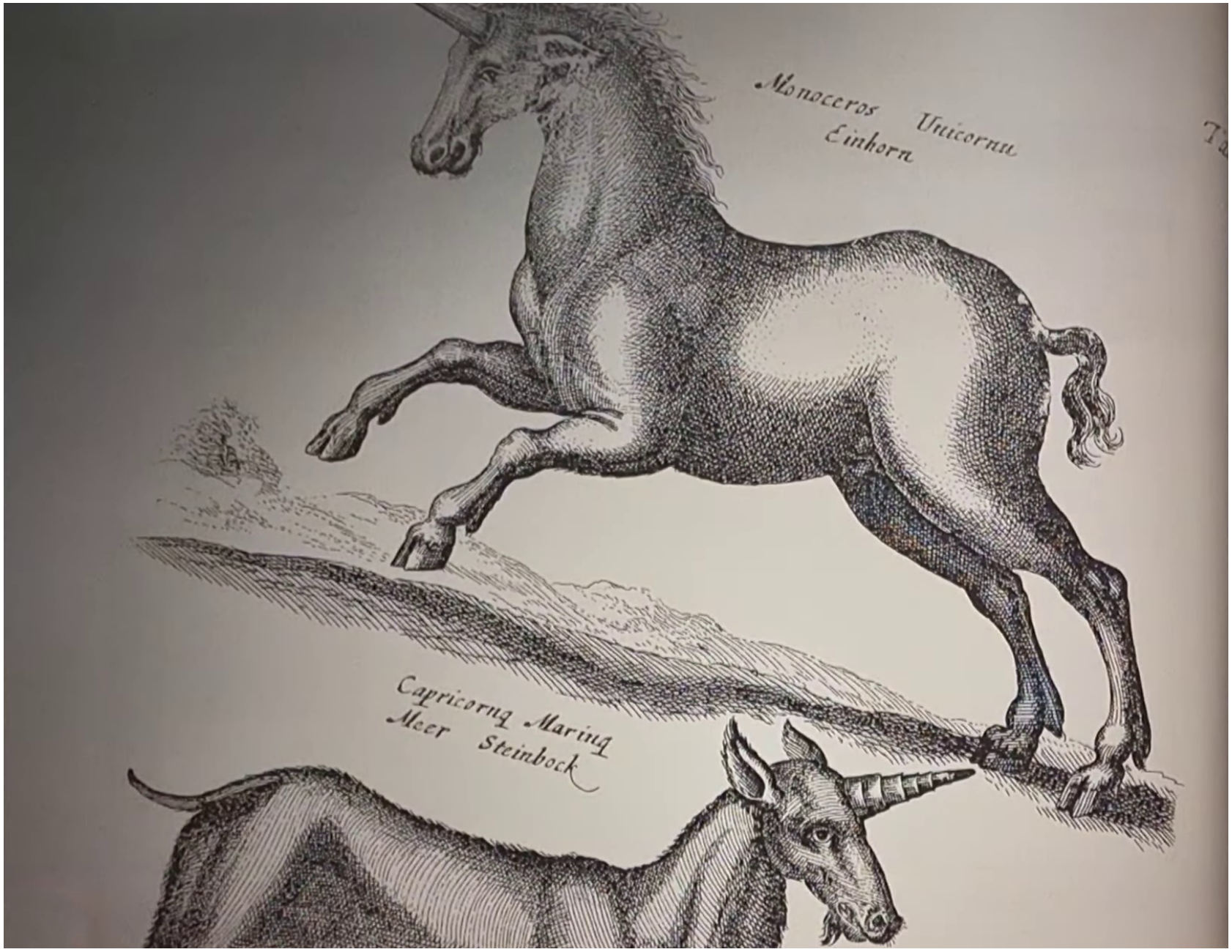
Once more we see a faintly glowing metal disc, lying half-buried in the dirt, a strange energy emanating from within. Except now we know that it's the Mirror, an excavated relic from a distant adventure. We see silhouettes leaning over it, but this time we see more: robed children crouched low, curious of the foreign object that has found its way into their village. An adult figure steps forth—the Boy, all grown up, covered in familiar tattoos, and a scraggly beard. He gathers the children around him at night—perhaps after having told them his tale—turning the Mirror in the light of their torches, looking for something. He points it up towards the sky, and the children gasp.

Suddenly we're taken up and away with its light—up through the darkest night, then through the brightest of clouds, across the endless expanse that has separated the Boy from his lost friend. The light bends down towards a familiar crater, finding its way past the Sentinel Tower (damaged but still standing), winding past crumbling bridges and into the caverns below. It takes us all the way back to the start of our adventure, past the underground lake, past glowing sconces that now burn for no one, and into that very first room—pitch dark, except for a shaft of light illuminating a circle of stones that once held the end of a chain. And then we hear it: a low, throaty purr and a huff, as we see a pair of glowing green eyes emerge in the darkness (and if you look especially carefully, a second pair of eyes too). The squeaks of baby tricos can be heard, and the scene fades out on this very special new family.





The team wanted to use a time-lapse of the Mirror to illustrate the passing of many years between the Boy's return and the Mirror being rediscovered, but this was cut near the end of production.


Monoceros Unicornu
Einhorn
Capricornq Marinq
Meer Steinbock

Trophies

Bronze: 9 **| Silver:** 7 **| Gold:** 7 **| Platinum:** 1

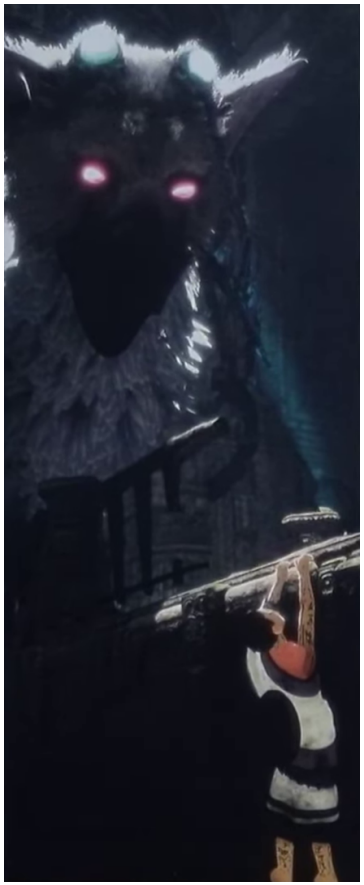
There are 24 Trophies to earn, and you need to play through the game at least twice to get them all ('Beast Friends Forever' requires 96 barrels and one playthrough grants you 48). For all Trophies of the 'Farm' category, remember that the counter for those Trophies does not reset when you reload your checkpoint. In other words, feel free to reload at a good spot until you've earned that Trophy.

The Last Guardian	SPECIAL
Grade	PLATINUM
Details	Collect all other Trophies.

Though We Are Far Apart	PROGRESSION
Grade	BRONZE
Details	Play the game all the way to the end.

Lightning Emissary	PROGRESSION
Grade	GOLD
Details	Reach the end of the game in 5 hours or less.

See the following text box for tips on how to earn the speed run Emissary Trophies more easily.



Fleet Emissary	PROGRESSION
Grade	SILVER
Details	Reach the end of the game in 15 hours or less.

See the following text box for tips on how to earn the speed run Emissary Trophies more easily.

Spry Emissary	PROGRESSION
Grade	BRONZE
Details	Reach the end of the game in 30 hours or less.

See the following text box for tips on how to earn the speed run Emissary Trophies more easily.

These five tips will speed you up during your Emissary Trophy attempts:

1) Reloading the last checkpoint also sets the timer back to when it was originally saves. So when you feel that a certain area took too long, you can try again without any loss of time.

2) The timer will pause during any cutscene in which the Boy cannot be controlled, while the game is paused, and during any loading sequence.

3) The Boy is very careful while balancing on ropes or beams. Hit the square button to dive jump and cover some ground more quickly, but make sure to perfectly align the camera right behind the Boy and press the Left Stick forward to dive into the right direction.

4) When you want to go down a ladder or rope faster or get off Trico's body in one go, press and keep holding X so that the Boy doesn't grab automatically after the initial fall.

5) You'll never be able to fully control Trico—ultimately, it's an animal—but in our experience, keep the following tips in mind:

- R1 + Circle doesn't just get Trico's attention—after the clapping animation, the Boy points ahead and asks Trico to go there. This works well even when the Boy stands right on Trico's back, since the clapping action makes Trico look at the Boy to "see" the direction he's pointing at. The R1 + Circle command generally works best when you just want Trico to proceed in one direction. This is even true in the water area where you need Trico to dive through the tunnels.

- R1 + Triangle works best when Trico is already standing right at the "jump-off position." If Trico is somewhere else, get off the creature and position the Boy at the jump-off position before asking the beast to jump.

- Don't overwhelm Trico with commands. If it's attracted to something else, Trico won't follow your orders. Just wait or press R1 + X to get its attention more quickly. Don't spam commands—that just confuses Trico.

Untouchable Emissary PROGRESSION

Grade GOLD

Details Reach the end of the game without a game over.

1) Let Trico do the fighting against the Yoroi whenever possible. Just climb on its back and wait until the fight is over.

2) The safest way to jump over a big gap is to keep running until the Boy hits the ledge and starts waving his arms to keep his balance. Just keep holding the Left Stick forward and press Triangle during that animation. Even though it doesn't look like a running jump, the jump's distance isn't shortened. The benefit is that you're sure to jump from the last point possible on that ledge and not waste any ground.

3) It's always easier to jump straight ahead/towards the camera direction for accurate jumps, so make sure to use the Right Stick heavily to line up the camera directly behind the Boy. This way, you only need to press forward with the Left Stick for the jump and you'll see exactly where you're going to land.

4) Loading the last checkpoint doesn't count as a death, so do it if you're about to fall into the abyss or be kidnapped by a Yoroi. Just hit the OPTIONS button on the controller and restart the scene.

Lock, Stock, and Barrel COLLECTIBLE

Grade GOLD

Details Give Trico every single barrel.

See the Collectible Locations guide. If you miss a barrel, you can collect it during another playthrough, so don't worry. But since other Trophies are connected to collecting a lot of barrels, we advise you not to miss any.

All Talked Out COLLECTIBLE

Grade SILVER

Details Hear every hint.

The Collectible Locations guide includes all hints in the order you can hear them during a playthrough. The table there shows which subtitle counts towards this Trophy and tells you where and how to reliably trigger each hint.

Dressed for the Fest COLLECTIBLE

Grade SILVER

Details Collect all the boy's costumes and equip them.

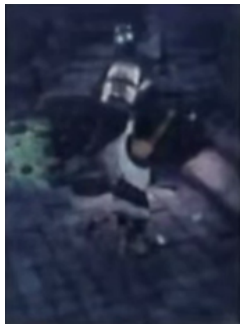
In order to unlock all costumes, you need to have 64 barrels collected. Since you can only find 48 barrels during a single playthrough, you need to start a second one if you want to get all costumes. Completing the game for the first time unlocks the Enduring Attire, 32 barrels unlocks the Homecoming Costume, 48 barrels unlocks the Horned Apparel, and 64 barrels unlocks the Warrior's Clothes.

That Hits the Spot FARM

Grade BRONZE

Details Hit suits of armor with 20 or more barrels or pots.

There are a few areas in the game where you find a barrel close to a nearby Yoroi. Just pick up the barrel and hit Square when the Yoroi is right in front of you. If you want to tick off this Trophy rather quickly, just hit a Yoroi and reload the last checkpoint to replay the scene.



Losing Their Minds FARM

Grade GOLD

Details Defeat 10 or more suits of armor by removing their heads.

You'll come across many situations during your regular playthrough where a downed Yoroi is lying right next to you. Press Circle to grab its helmet and keep Circle held while pulling the Left Stick away from the Yoroi's body to remove it. The battle in front of the Sentinel Tower is a particularly good spot to complete the Trophy due to the many tougher Yoroi who won't be killed by a single swipe from Trico.

Get Off My Back! BATTLE

Grade SILVER

Details Cling onto a suit of armor's back for 30 seconds or longer.

This can be a tricky once since very often Trico attacks the Yoroi that you're clinging to before the 30 seconds have passed. If you haven't managed to get the Trophy before the end of the game, then the battle inside the Sentinel Tower is a good spot for this. Wait for the phase where Yoroi with eye-shields prevent Trico from helping you. Usually, one Yoroi will come after you. Make yourself some room, then target the approaching Yoroi with the Mirror when it's near. When it begins to go into 'meditation' stance, quickly run around and jump onto the Yoroi's back as it's getting up. While clinging onto it, keep pressing the Left Stick to either side, so it won't be able to throw you off.

Thundering Wonder FARM

Grade BRONZE

Details Defeat 20 or more suits of armor with Trico's lightning.

An easy Trophy that can be achieved during the huge battles in front of and inside the Sentinel Tower.

Last-Minute Reprieve FARM

Grade BRONZE

Details Have Trico defeat 20 or more suits of armor while they are carrying the boy.

For this Trophy, let yourself be grabbed by a green Yoroi when you're not close to a door and Trico is near. Red and blue Yoroi don't die instantly when thrown by Trico, but the green ones do, so you can be sure that the rescue counts towards the Trophy's total.

Beast Friends Forever COLLECTIBLE

Grade SILVER

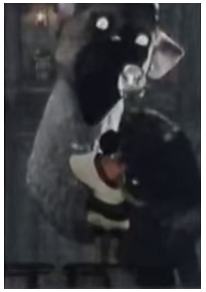
Details Paint Trico's entire body.

In order to paint Trico, you need to get the Fine Featherpainter, unlocked after you've collected 96 barrels. This requires at least two full playthroughs if you collect all 48 barrels during both games.

Practice Makes Perfect FARM

Grade BRONZE

Details Have Trico catch a thrown barrel in mid-air 20 times or more.



Trico must be in a 'ready-to-catch-a-barrel' state before you throw one towards it. The first requirement for this state is that its eyes must be glowing yellow. Trico's head or nose should be pointing at you while you carry the barrel. Finally, there's a brief moment where its movements are at a minimum, when the creature is expecting the throw. This is the moment to throw the barrel.

The Call of Nature MISC.

Grade GOLD

Details Catch Trico…in the act.

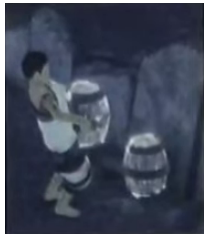
This can happen at any time during the game and in most cases it will happen automatically during a full playthrough. You can't really force Trico to perform the act, but you can increase the chances if you look at the beast once in a while.

Balancing Barrels MISC.

Grade SILVER

Details Move 10 meters or more while carrying 2 or more stacked barrels.

The difficult part is placing the first barrel flat on the ground without it falling to one side. Once this is done, pick up another barrel and place the Boy right in front of the first one. Press X to gently place the second one on top, then press Circle to pick up the lower one. While carrying both barrels, push the Left Stick slightly forward.



Keep On Running MISC.

Grade GOLD

Details Avoid Trico for 3 minutes or longer when he goes wild in an antenna room.

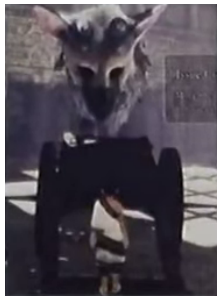
This is easiest to do in the first antenna room. Run in circles around the best and avoid getting near its head. If you think Trico is about to snap, press Square while running to perform a dive maneuver to evade the attack. There is also an easier, guaranteed way to get the Trophy: Once Trico goes wild, run to the bridge and hang down fro either side, since the beast won't be able to reach you there.

Broad-Backed MISC.

Grade BRONZE

Details Land on Trico's back after being propelled upwards from a cart.

You can get this Trophy only in the 'arena'. Position the cart far enough from the center so that the Boy won't reach the metal beams at the top of the arena, but not far enough that he'll bump right into the lower ceiling. Place the cart barely outside the sunny floor. Once in the air, steer towards Trico, as you won't always land on its back automatically.



Cryptozoologist BATTLE

Grade BRONZE

Details Touch all enemy beasts.

At the very end of the game during the battle atop the Sentinel Tower, run from one trico to the next and cling onto their feathers for a brief moment. You need to touch all seven tricos this way to unlock the Trophy.

Intensive Care MISC.

Grade GOLD

Details Remove all spears from Trico as quickly as possible.

One or more spears must not remain stuck in Trico for more than one hour. The number of spears does not matter; as long as you pay attention that Trico does not carry spears for too long, you'll unlock this Trophy rather easily.

Collar COLLECTIBLE

Grade BRONZE

Details Make Trico put his head in every hole.

See the Collectible Locations guide, where we've included the locations of all 13 holes. If you miss a hole, you can catch up on it during a later playthrough—just remember which one(s) you missed.

Lifeline FARM

Grade SILVER

Details Saved from falling by Trico's tail 10 or more times.

There is one particular area that makes getting this Trophy quick and easy: It's right after the cutscene of Trico's first flight, when the beast crashes into a tower. After the scene, Trico desperately tries to get into the tower, but won't do so until the Boy reaches the tower first. Drop down to the tail as many times as required to unlock the Trophy. Don't forget to steer the Boy during the fall.

Here is a quick rundown of how to use the Collectible Locations Guide:

1) The flowchart lists all three types of collectibles in order during a regular playthrough. This way, you won't miss a hint while you're searching for the next barrel.

2) We have used the area names from our story playthrough in chapter 3 to give you a rough idea of when to expect a certain collectible. However, that doesn't mean that each collectible can be found in that exact area.

3) Not every subtitle counts towards the 'All Talked Out' Trophy. In fact, there are over 100 subtitles in the game, but only 62 are required.

4) We have listed the exact conditions that trigger each hint, and while some may sound a little technical, they can end up saving you a lot of time during your hint quest.

5) If you can't remember which subtitle/hint you heard last, press R3 or L3 for a few seconds until the Boy sits down and meditates. After a short while, the last subtitle will be repeated.

6) Butterflies love barrels! If you see a blue butterfly, you know that you are close to a barrel; if you see two, you are even closer. Three butterflies, and the barrel should be right next to you.

7) A barrel only counts towards the Trophy if Trico has eaten it. So if you're about to enter an area that triggers a cutscene after which a barrel might become inaccessible, make sure Trico has had its meal first.

8) If you miss a collectible or two during one playthrough, don't worry. You don't have to collect them all again for the corresponding Trophy—just the ones you missed.

9) If you die or reload your checkpoint, make sure to check if the last collectible was saved as well. Chances are that you need to collect it again. This behavior is different for the 'Farm' type Trophies, where each count is saved as soon as you perform that action.

Collectibles

Hints: 62 | **Trico Holes:** 13 | **Barrels:** 48

We have combined hints, holes, and barrels into one organized flowchart, since we figured you'd prefer to earn all those Trophies in one playthrough. However, in case you're interested in just one category, you can easily spot barrels (butterfly-ish blue) and holes (smokey green) in that big list. We have added tips to certain barrels whenever it wasn't entirely obvious how to reach them.

Trico's Cave

Hint 1

In its pain, the poor beast was wary.
I felt that my best option would be to withdraw and reconsider.

Leave the spear in Trico's shoulder for 30 seconds. Get near Trico, so that it starts to intimidate the Boy and barks or tries to attack.

Hint 2

The beast was far from happy.
It seemed greatly pained by the spears that pierced its flesh.

Don't remove the spears from Trico's shoulder & leg and wait for 60 seconds. The camera must be directed at Trico's head while it is bothered by the spears.

Hint 3

I decided to help it. To try to pull the spears from its flesh…

Wait for another 60 seconds after Hint 2. The Boy must not be on top of Trico.

Hint 4

I wondered if the beats might be hungering for something…

After the cutscene when the Boy is conscious again, neither give Trico a barrel nor put a barrel next to its mouth.

Hint 5

It was wary, and would not allow me to approach the spear.

Climb on Trico and get near its shoulder/neck or do something that disturbs it. (Hints 5 and 6 are played alternately after 60 seconds.)

Hint 6

Thinking it unwise to upset the beast any further, I decided to withdraw.

See Hint 5.

Hint 7

I was more than a little surprised.
I had not imagined for a moment that the beast could possibly wolf the barrel down whole.

After the Boy says: "Are you…hungry?": a) No barrel should be near Trico's mouth, b) Trico must cry a few times for a barrel, c) The camera should point at the Boy and Trico while the Boy isn't carrying a barrel, d) The Boy must be outside of the caution area (around Trico's head). (These are the same conditions for the "Are you…hungry?" line.)

Hint 8

I suspected that the great beast had not eaten in some time.

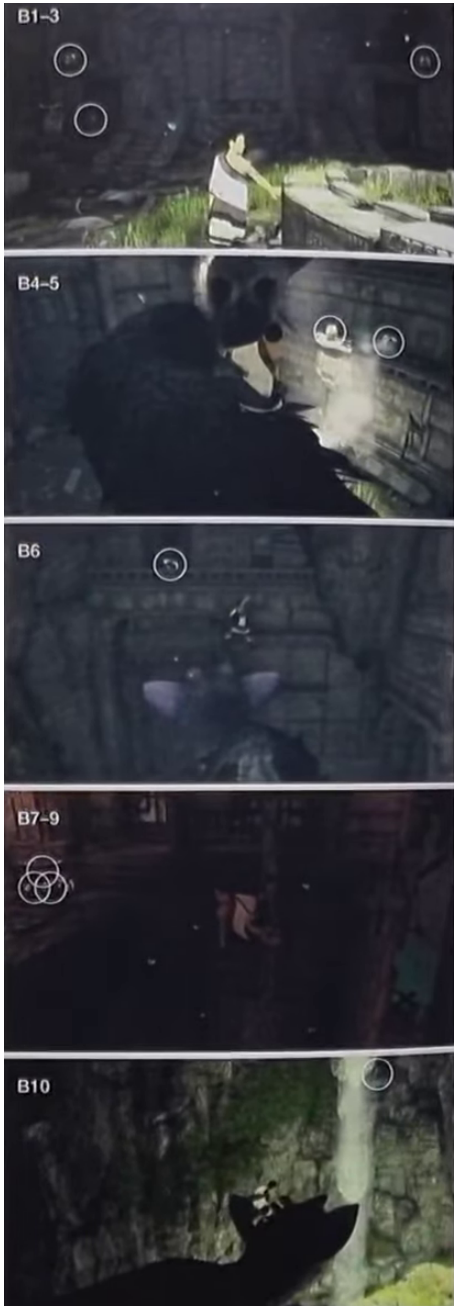
60 seconds after Hint 7 with the same conditions still being met.

Barrels 1-2

Hint 9

I wondered if its hunger might not yet have been satisfied.

After Trico has eaten two barrels, point the camera at the pair for 60 seconds and meet the conditions of Hint 7.



Hint 10

I decided to go in search of more barrels.

Just wait for another 60 seconds after Hint 9, while the same conditions are met.

Hint 11

The beast seemed reluctant to eat with me so close by…

One or more barrels must be near Trico's mouth while the Boy stands within the caution area (near Trico's head) and Trico intimidates the Boy for eight seconds.

Barrel 3

Hint 12

My offerings appeared to have sated the beast's appetite--
but it was still in pain, and could not stand.

After Trico has eaten three barrels and tries to stand up, but instead tumbles over.

Hint 13

The spear in its right shoulder prevented it from standing.

After Trico has eaten three barrels and the Boy has said: "Does it still hurt?," the spear should still be in Trico's shoulder and the Boy should be 3m or less from Trico (with the camera pointing at the spear).

Hint 14

I did my best to remove the spear.

After Hint 13, wait another 60 seconds without removing the spear.

Hint 15

The beast seemed greatly improved. But it was still unable to move freely--
the enormous collar about its neck saw to that.

After Trico has eaten all three barrels and the shoulder spear has been removed, Trico must still wear the collar while the Boy calls to it from afar. Trico's movement must be stopped by the chain either three times lightly or once heavily (with the camera pointed at Trico's head).

Hint 16

I resolved to free the beast.

30 seconds after Hint 15, again the Boy must call out and Trico must be stopped by the chain three times lightly or once heavily.

Hint 17

Having thoroughly explored the area--
I clambered onto the beast's back--
and made my way toward the source of the white smoke.

Remove the collar from Trico's neck. 60 seconds must have passed after Trico's sleep. Position the Boy away from the tunnel but point the camera towards it. The Boy must not be on Trico.

Barrels 4-5

The Mirror Room

Hint 18

The beast at my side, I raised the mirror…

Wait 180 seconds next to Trico without raising the Mirror.

Barrel 6

Look to the left from where you picked up barrels 4 and 5. Jump from Trico's head to one of the two ledges and climb up to the opening above.

Hint 19

Though assailed by doubts--
I thought that if I could harness the destructive power of the beast's lightning--
perhaps we might find a way out. It seemed foolish not to try.

Raise the Mirror and activate Trico's lightning, but don't destroy the gate. Wait 120 seconds.

The Underground Lake

Hint 20

My friend seemed reluctant to swim.
I wondered if I might tempt the beast with one or two of its beloved barrels…

To trigger: "You don't like water?," call Trico twice or more from the water and make it bark twice or more with the camera pointed at Trico. After that, destroy the box with the barrels and wait 180 seconds, aiming the camera at Trico.

Barrels 7-9

Move the box off the edge to break it and free the barrels. Throw the barrels into the water for Trico to reach them.

Barrel 10

Jump from Trico's head to the ivy on the left side of the waterfall and climb to the opening behind the waterfall.

Bridging the Gap

Hint 21

It seemed that the door on the far side might be broken--
with the aid of my companion's lightning.

Don't destroy the wooden gate with Trico's lightning, and wait until Trico has looked at the wooden gate once or more and barked twice or more. Point the camera at the door.

Trico Holes 1-2

Barrel 11

In the corridor where Trico joins you after jumping over the gap, use Trico's lightning to destroy the rubble and free the barrel.

Barrel 12

In the room with the chain. Jump from Trico's head to one of the brick ledges on the wall opposite the chain.

Barrel 13

At the end of this small mine entrance.

Trico Hole 3

Just call Trico from where you found Barrel 13.

Out Amongst the Trees

Barrel 14

Go through the crack in the wall.

Barrel 15

After using the switch to raise the gate, this barrel is at the end of the corridor.

The Antenna and the Yoroi

Hint 22

I decided to thoroughly explore the area around the unmoving beast…

After the cutscene when Trico is asleep, wait 180 seconds without climbing down its tail.

Hint 23

Something in the armor's ill-omened air told me to keep my distance…

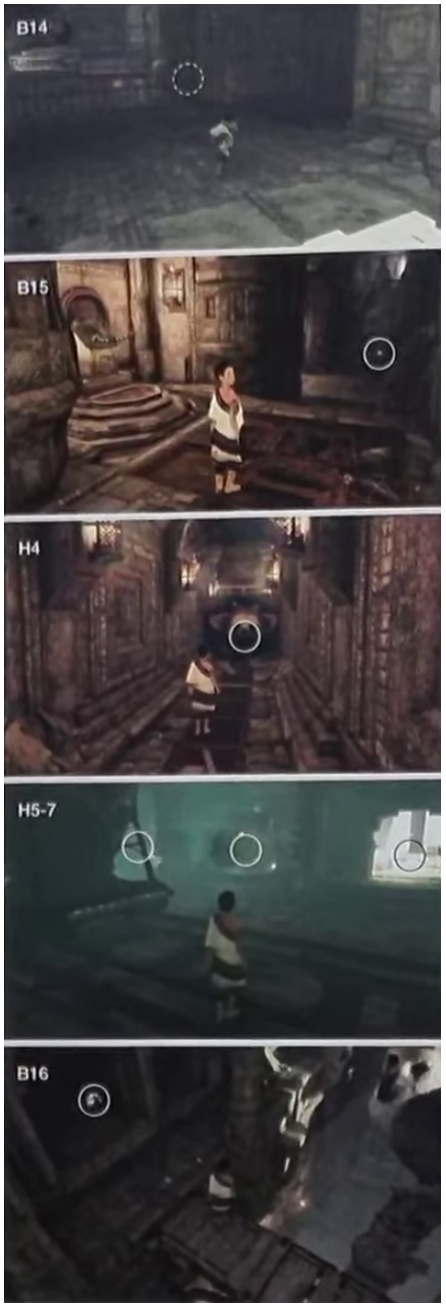
After climbing down on Trico's tail, move forward through the narrow passageway.

Hint 24

Trico seemed greatly unsettled after the battle with the suits of armor.
I had to find a way to calm my companion's nerves.

After Trico has destroyed the four Yoroi, the Boy must be within 4.5m or less of Trico for at least 4 seconds.

Trico Hole 4



The Strange Green Mist

Hint 25

The beast was enchanted by the scent of the pot, and would not move.
There was nothing else for it. I would have to try and dispel the heady scent.

Aim the camera at the pot for 25 seconds to hear: "It was trying desperately to squeeze itself through the hole and reach the pot." Then wait 87.5 seconds. The pot must be open with the Boy inside the room, while Trico sticks its head into the room (with the camera pointed at Trico up close).

Trico Holes 5-7

Through the Ruins

Barrel 16

Where Trico jumps on a pillar and you have to climb its tail, you'll find one barrel to the right of the broken bridge…

Barrel 17

…and another on the opposite side.

Pillar Room

Barrel 18

Trico Gets Stuck

Hint 26

Desperate to calm the beast, I stroked and petted him feverishly.
Thinking back, it seems almost that stroking in different places elicited different responses…

After any battle between the second and seventh against the Yoroi, pet Trico while it is in a rage.

Gaining Control

Barrel 19

Hint 27

The beast had grown accustomed to my company.
So accustomed, in fact, that it began to mimic my movements.

In the open area where the narrator tells you to give Trico commands, make Trico do the following: Destroy the box with the barrels, attack, jump in place, jump onto a pillar or stand up and lean against a wall.

Hint 28

I ran, jumped, capered, and cavorted.
And in so doing, I learned something of what the beast might be encouraged to do.

Right after Hint 27.

Barrels 20-23

Let Trico destroy the wooden box to release the barrels inside.

Barrel 24

Command Trico to stand up against the wall left of the gate that leads to barrels 20-23.

Barrel 25

After Trico and the Boy have crossed the chasm where the stone bridge once was, get Trico to stand up against the wall and then jump from the beast onto the balustrade on the right.

A Pot On A Chain

Hint 29

I searched carefully, convinced that there was something nearby.

Wait for 300 seconds in the room with the pot on a chain. When you cling to Trico and it jumps to the upper floor, the timer is reset.

Hint 30

It seemed that my companion was very fond indeed of these pots.

Use the switch that lowers the pot on the chain. Wait 180 seconds without holding the pot, but stay close to the pot and point the camera at it.

Hint 31

I wonder if I might be able to use the pot with which the beast was so enamored…

Wait another 180 seconds after Hint 30 (same conditions).

Hint 32

The hanging chain appeared to be connected to the door in some way…

Carry the pot to the room with Trico and wait 240 seconds. The Boy must be near the pot with the camera pointing at it.

Barrel 25

The Walls Have Eyes

Hint 33

It was a striking design, akin to an eye in shape…
The beast seemed transfixed by it…
and at the same time terrified.

Point the camera at Trico while it reacts to spotting the glass eye. The Boy saying "What's the matter?," triggers the hint.

Alone

Hint 34

Fearful of the symbol in the glass, the beast refused to take another step…

In the room with the glass eye and the two Yoroi, wait 120 seconds and point the camera at Trico. (You can also trigger Hint 35 first by moving up to the chain.)

Hint 35

I examined the chain with great interest.
It seemed…different to the ones I had encountered before.

Wait next to the draggable chain for 90 seconds.

Barrel 27 (see previous page)

Climb up the draggable chain and you'll be able to see the barrel on the nearby platform.

The Giant Mobile

Hint 36

The beast appeared to want to show me the way ahead.
And so I clambered onto its back…

Get Trico to stand up against the stone overpass three times (while pointing the camera at it).

Barrel 28-29 (see previous page)

Jump from Trico to the stone overpass from the previous hint.

Feeding Trico

Barrel 30 (see previous page)

You can carry the barrel up without ever throwing it. The first screenshot of this page shows the easiest route.

After The Fall

Barrel 31

You can carry the barrel up while throwing it only once. The third screenshot of this page shows the easiest route.

To Protect The Boy

Hint 37

Having found myself at what seemed to be a dead end, I searched for a way onward.

Wait for 120 seconds on the rooftop.

Barrel 32

Barrel 33

Carry a helmet to the last of the three statues to activate it and create an opening. The barrel is in the small room behind it.

Transfixed Again

Hint 38

I fell through the air, convinced for that brief moment that this was the end for me-- and then the comforting softness of the beast's back came up to greet me.

(Trigger the next two hints first!) When Trico reaches the pot with the green mist, jump down and land on Trico's back.

Hint 39

The entire area was alive with the strange aroma that so captivated my companion. Distracted by the scent of the pot as it was, the beast would not heed my call.

When Trico reaches the pot with the green mist, call out to it.

Hint 40

There was nothing else for it. I would have to try and jump onto Trico's back.

When Trico reaches the pot with the green mist, wait for 180 seconds (while pointing the camera at its head).

Hint 41

I would not be able to leave this place unaided…

In the water-filled area, don't call Trico and don't grab its tail, just wait for 180 seconds.

Hint 42

I clung on tightly, and together we made our escape.

After hint 41, wait another 180 seconds with the same conditions.

Hungry Again

Barrel 34

Trico Holes 8-13

A Collapsing Corridor

Hint 43

I knew what I had to do… I left the beast behind and ran.

Triggered right after the cutscene where the corridor starts to collapse.

The Arena

Barrel 35

Hint 44

The cogwheel on the wall seemed to be connected somehow to the gate…

After the battle against the Yoroi, give no instructions to Trico. It will play with the

cog a little while and then the hint will trigger.

Barrel 36

Position the cart in the center of the sunlit area. Load the cart with one (or more) helmets and place the Boy on the cart, too. Leave the cart just before Trico stomps, so that the helmets are catapulted with maximum speed upwards. There is no formula to guarantee that one helmet reaches the floor level, but that is your goal. Once successful, use the cart to propel the Boy upwards and use the helmet to activate the Yoroi up there. The barrel is in the opening behind it.

A Short Swim

Barrel 37

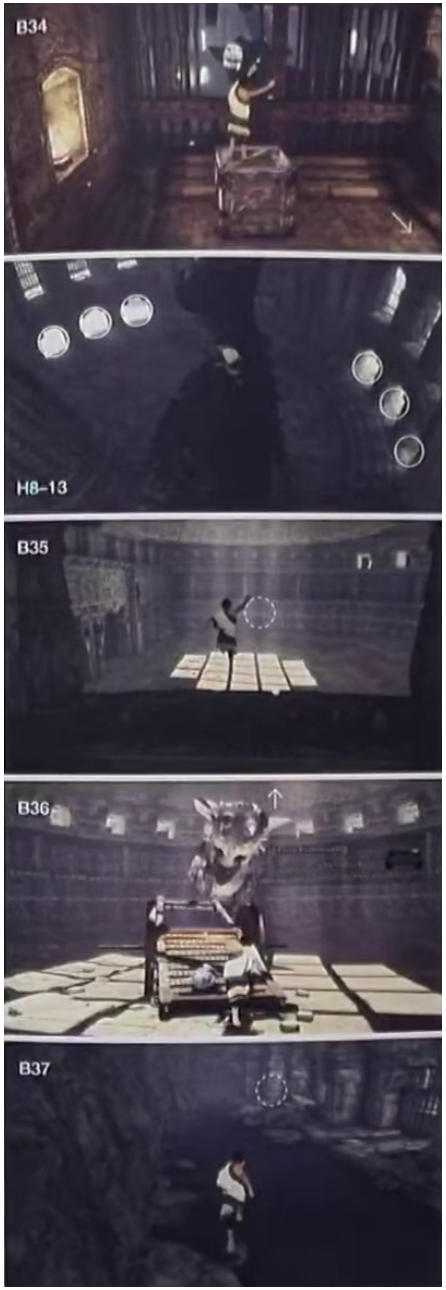
Hint 45

The beast appeared not to want to enter the water.
I resolved to lead by example…

Wait for 300 seconds before jumping into the water.

Barrel 38 (see next page)

Jump from Trico's head to the ivy on the right side and climb to the opening.



In The Nest

Hint 46

Higher and higher I climbed in hopes of finding my companion…

Wait 240 seconds before you touch the tail of the darker trico.

Hint 47

Desperately, I searched for a means of escape…

After the other trico is awake, climb up on the tree and wait for 160 seconds.

Trapped In A Cage

Hint 48

By having the beast push the cage, I was able to overcome obstacles.

Move the cage right next to the obstacle and point the camera at the right route. Wait 60 seconds. Trico must not push the cage.

Hint 49

The helmet…
Perhaps attaching it to a suit of armor might reveal a way onward…

On the other side with the two elevators, after Trico has sat down, wait for 60 seconds before grabbing the helmet.

Barrel 39 (see next page)

Use the elevator to carry the helmet from the upper floor to the lower floor. There, activate the statue to once again find a barrel behind it.

Barrel 40 (see next page)

Watch out for the grassy spot on the right which leads to a narrow passage and an opening with the barrel. Your natural route doesn't lead you there, so the barrel can be easily missed.

The Coal Mine

Hint 50

Though the way was narrow, Trico seemed able to squeeze through.

From the moment Trico enters the coal mine, the hint triggers after 180 seconds. The Boy must be at the end of the long corridor.

The Crumbling Tower

Barrel 41

Follow the narrow curved stairs all the way up to reach the top opening where the barrel lies. Note: Be careful when you feed Trico the barrel, as it could start rolling on the stairs and fall into the abyss.

A Savage Battle

Hint 51

Throwing caution to the wind…
I gave the masked beast's tail a mighty tug…

After Trico and its opponent have fallen to the second level, follow them. Wait for 180 seconds before grabbing the other trico's tail.

Hint 52

I had to help my companion. I had to jump.

After Trico has fallen down to the bottom level, wait for 180 seconds before jumping down.

Barrels 42-43

After getting the Mirror back, have Trico destroy the wooden gate on the upper floor, and climb up the chain to reach the new opening, where you'll find the barrels. Note that Barrels 44-45 can be picked up before these two.

Barrels 44-45

Climb up the stacked stone blocks left of the carts, and jump from there to the lower cart. Climb up to the upper cart to initiate a cutscene (or use Trico's lightning on the carts from the ground). Once you've regained control, the two barrels are visible.

Last Antenna Room

Hint 53

My companion struggled valiantly to resist.

After the antenna is activated and the Boy screams "Trico," wait for 60 seconds without destroying the device.

The Sentinel Tower

Barrel 46

After the big battle, make Trico stand up against the wall with the four windows. The barrel is behind the third window from the left.

Barrel 47

You can’t just drop down to the ledge with the barrel below, so get Trico’s help. Position the Boy above the ledge that is to the right of the one with the barrel. Call Trico and wait until it sits down. Grab the end of its tail and drag it across the edge of the platform. The Boy should now hang on Trico’s tail right above the ledge. To avoid missing the ledge, jump towards the wall and you’ll land safely.

Hint 54

At last, having scoured the outside of the tower, I found a way inside.

Wait for 240 seconds before you go to the entrance of the Tower.

Hint 55

The plinth seemed almost as if it were made to house the mirror.

After the battle against the Yoroi, wait 180 seconds before you approach the plinth.

Hint 56

The ceiling prevented us from continuing our ascent.

Ride the first elevator in the Sentinel Tower while the ceiling is still closed.

Hint 57

Clambering over Trico’s tail, I made my way to the level below…

Wait inside the first elevator room for 180 seconds. If you leave the room or cling onto Trico’s tail, the timer resets.

Barrel 48

Congratulations! You have found all 48 barrels in the game.

After you have finished your first playthrough, start a new game (by choosing ‘Continue’) and check the ‘Items’ menu to see what goodies those barrels have unlocked. You’ll find more details about the bonus items on the next page.

Remember, if you want to collect more barrels to unlock more bonus items, you need to start a new game using ‘Continue’, otherwise all your previously collected barrels will be lost.

Hint 58

All that we found was a hole so small that only I could squeeze through.

Wait for 60 seconds in front of the small hole that the Boy has to crawl into.

Master Of The Valley

Hint 59

I know now…
…that this was the master of the valley.

Just drop down into the room of the Master of the Valley.

Hint 60

It seemed that the light of the mirror suppressed the great darkness somewhat.

Wait for 180 seconds before aiming the Mirror at the Core.

Hint 61

Resolved to face whatever may come, I brought the spinning blades to a halt.

In the area with the spinning blades, wait 180 seconds before using the Mirror to stop them.

Hint 62

Unbelievably, the tail retained its power even when severed…

Triggers 180 seconds after Trico’s tail has been torn off.

Note: If you missed any Hint, you don’t have to listen to them all again, just the ones you have missed. Make sure to start a new game by choosing ‘Continue’ instead of “New Game’ to keep your records.

Unlockable Items

Outfits: 4 | **Items:** 2 | **Minimum playthroughs:** 2

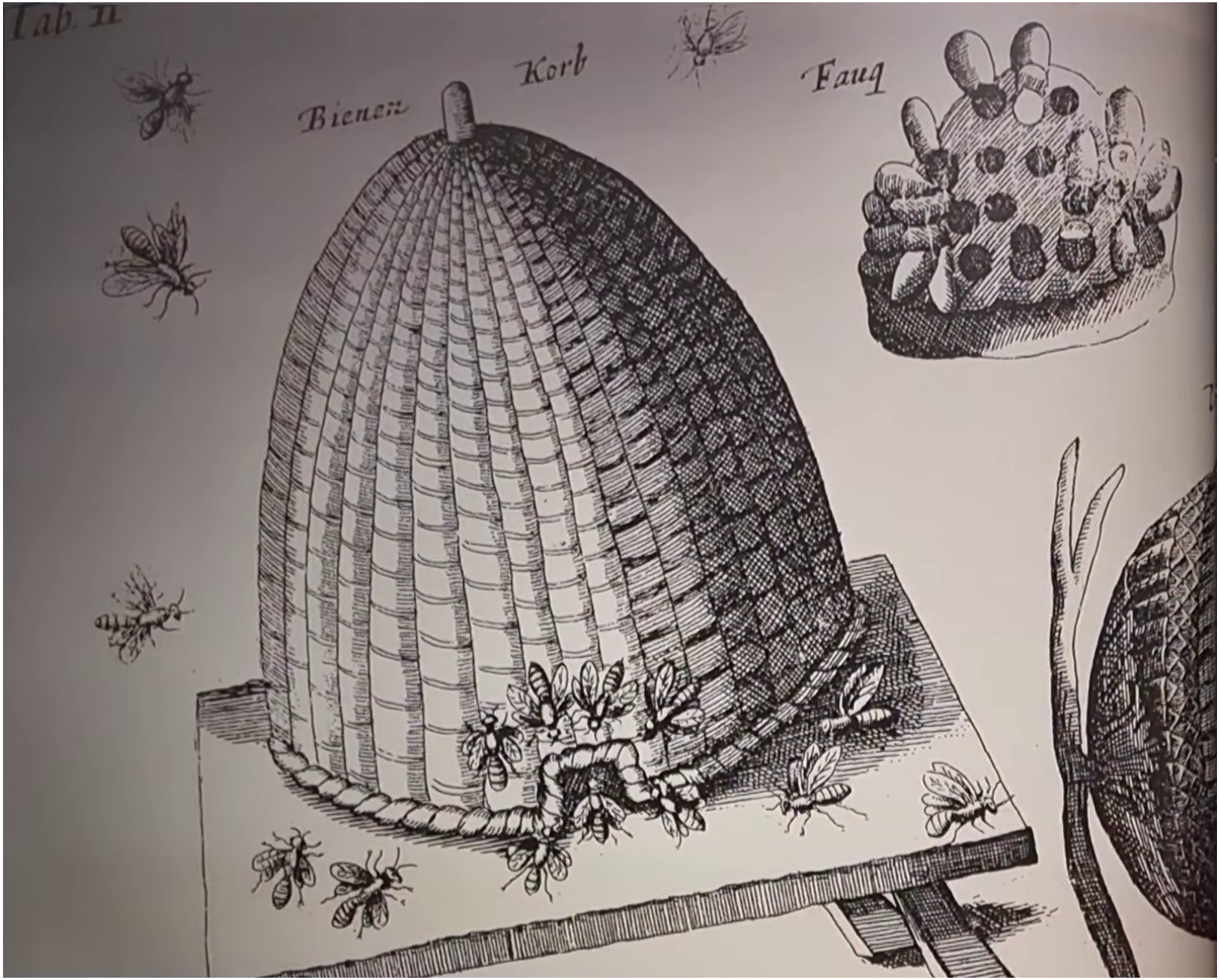
For players coming back after completing the game there are a few surprises to unlock and play with. All but one are linked to the amount of barrels you've managed to feed Trico, so tracking down as many of them as you can is a good idea if you're interested in bonus goodies.

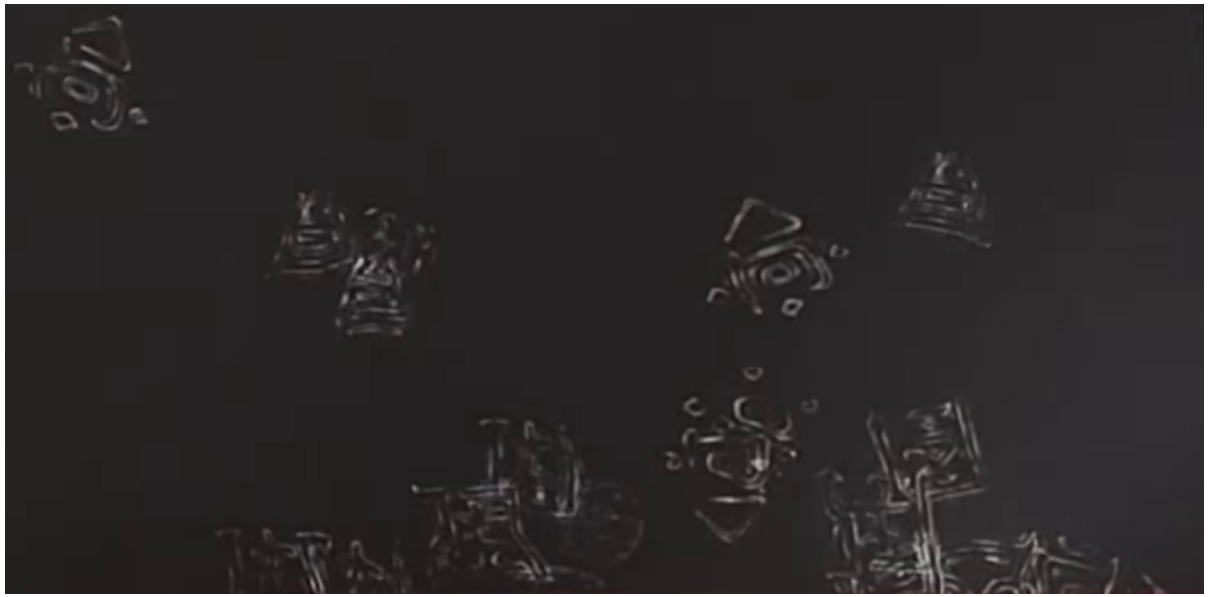
Unlockable Items	
1 Badge of Honor	A MEDAL FOR TRICO
Unlocked after playing through the game for the first time. Just hit 'Continue' from the main menu and your accomplishments from your first playthrough are carried over to the new game.	
2 Enduring Attire	VILLAGER'S OUTFIT
Unlocked after playing through the game for the first time.	
3 Homecoming Costume	VILLAGER'S OUTFIT
Unlocked after collecting 32 barrels.	
4 Horned Apparel	ICO'S OUTFIT
Unlocked after collecting 48 barrels.	
5 Warrior's Clothes	WANDER'S OUTFIT
Unlocked after collecting 64 barrels.	
6 Fine Featherpainter	REPLACEMENT FOR THE MIRROR
Unlocked after collecting 96 barrels. The Featherpainter can be used to paint Trico with different colors. Paint its entire body to earn the 'Beast Friends Forever' Trophy.	

After completing the game, a new option called ‘Items’ will appear in the menu when the game is paused—it’s from here that you can choose to equip any rewards you’ve unlocked. Feeding Trico enough barrels unlocks new costumes for the Boy, each of which has its own theme. The first two are based on attire from the Boy’s village, and the Horned Apparel and Warrior’s Clothes reference *ICO* and *Shadow of the Colossus*, respectively. With either of these last two equipped, the sound effects when the Boy runs are changed. It’s subtle, but some of the new sound effects used are from *ICO* and *Shadow of the Colossus*. The team also had plans to make gameplay changes when wearing these costumes—while wearing the Warrior’s Clothes the Boy might climb faster, for example, or he wouldn’t take damage when falling while wearing the Horned Apparel—but these were never implemented.

The Fine Featherpainter is the final reward most players will unlock, requiring 96 barrels to be fed to Trico. This can be achieved in two playthroughs, but only if all 48 barrels are collected both times. The device looks like a Trico-shaped toy, and shines a light that can paint Trico one of seven selectable colors, in addition to an eraser function that gives Trico back its default color. Tanaka tells us about a different system for earning rewards that got lost along the way: “We experimented with a treasure chest that Trico could eat and would then spit out a gold or silver treasure, and you could trade these in for rewards. Five silver ones would equal one gold one, and a gold would unlock a reward such as a costume or the Fine Featherpainter. We also had the idea for treasure to be hidden in Trico’s poop…” Tanji adds that “There were also some ideas about wearing special glasses that revealed the location of the barrels.”

For completing the game and starting again you’ll be awarded a Badge of Honor, which, once equipped, hangs from Trico’s neck like a collar. There are two further Badges you can earn by completing the game subsequent times. Each Badge features a different symbol emblazoned upon it. As a small easter egg, these strange symbols are actually from the written language used for the subtitles in *ICO*. Though each of these had their own meanings in *ICO*, the team say that in *The Last Guardian* they simply represent the numbers one, two, and three (and denote the second, third, and fourth playthroughs).


Tab. II
Bienen
Korb
Faul



ICO

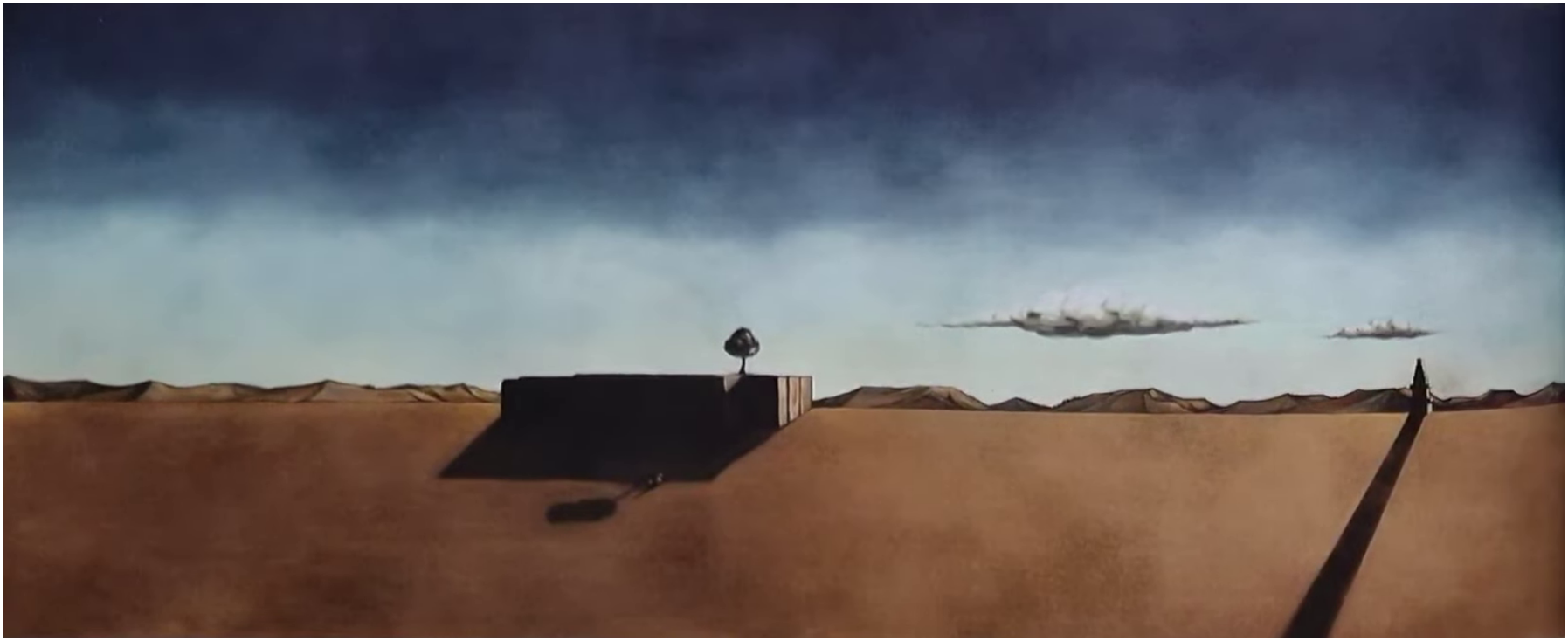
While Fumito Ueda’s three games thus far—*The Last Guardian*, *Shadow of the Colossus*, and *ICO*—may not formally be considered a trilogy, there are enough thematic parallels and in-game interconnections that they are worth considering as disparate parts of a whole. Beyond their obvious aesthetic similarities—wherein crumbling bridges, isolated castles, and ancient, overgrown worlds serve as backdrops—they share an exceptional economy of design, a purity of vision that puts them in a category all their own.

Creator Fumito Ueda has confirmed that both *ICO* and *Shadow of the Colossus* take place in the same world. This was illustrated in the image shown on these pages, taken from the main menu screen of the 2011 *HD Collection* that contains both titles—when toggling between the two games, artwork of each of their worlds is shown (very briefly) to be connected by a broad ocean between them, populated by a scant few islands and a sailboat. (This also falls in line with an interesting discovery by fans, in the form of an area on the Western coast of *Shadow of the Colossus'* Forbidden Lands that looks strikingly similar to the beach that Ico and Yorda wash up on at the end of *ICO*.)

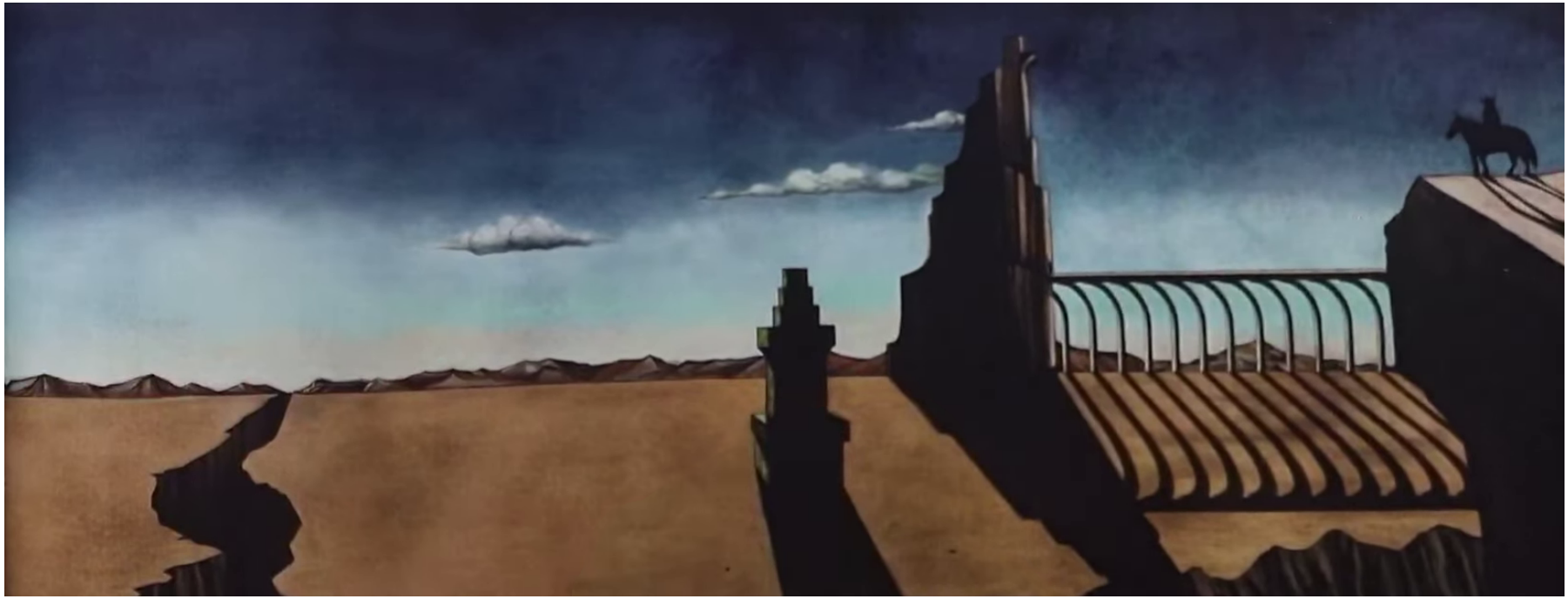
The Last Guardian easily contains the most narrative content of the three games, and the most overt view of its wider world and how the ritual at the center of the story fits into it. Countless questions remain, of course, but Ueda has never been one for explanations—the many mysteries of his oeuvre are one of its greatest appeals. Still, there's a deep rabbit hole of connections between the three games; from broad themes such as sacrifice, companionship, and tradition, to tiny, more literal details like the appearance of doves and lizards, and everything in between…including horned protagonists, shadow creatures, strange energy beams, and an impressive amount of collapsing bridges.

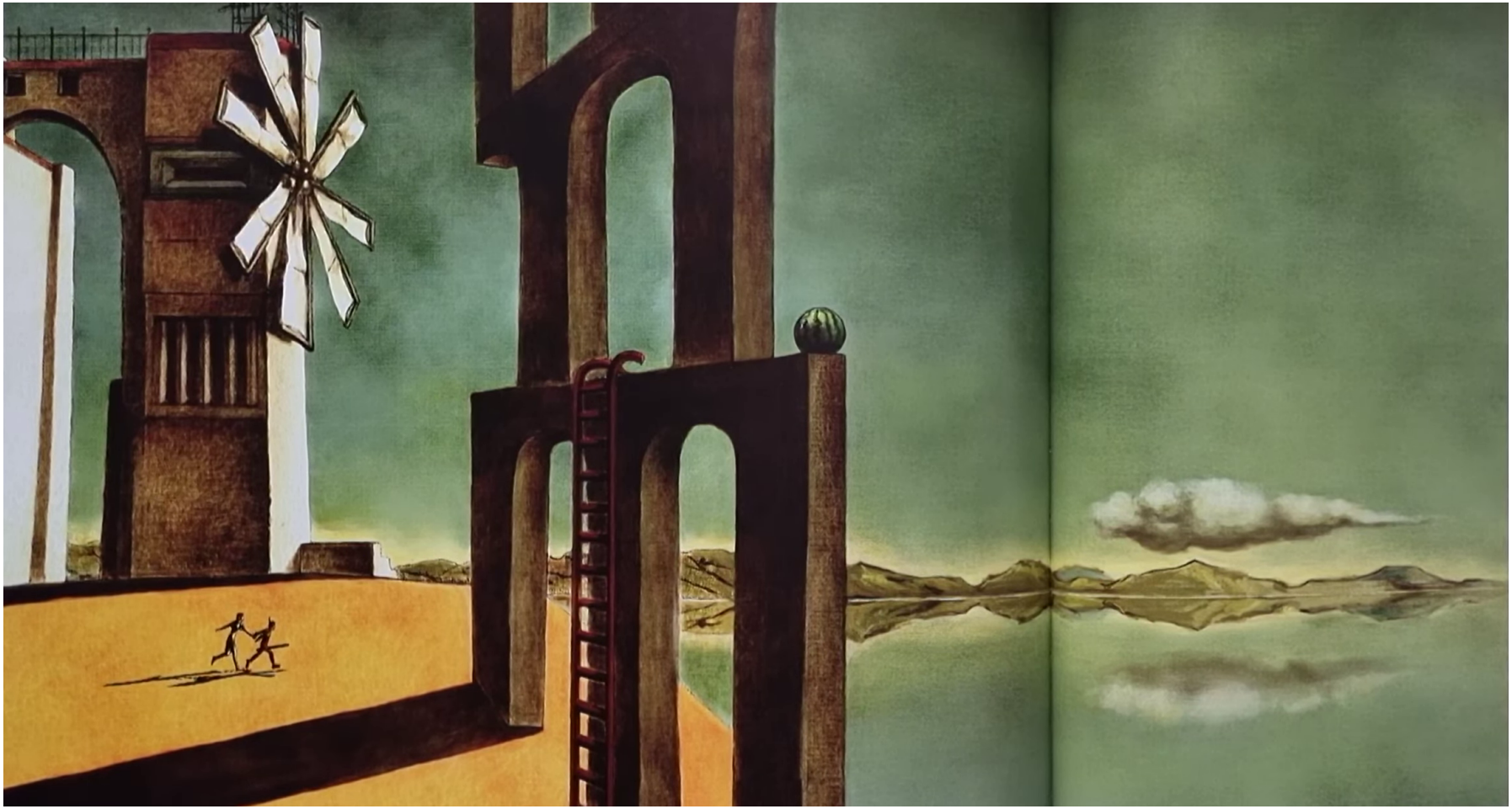
The Last Guardian's most acute interconnection can be found in the strange, circular mirror room near the start of the game, whose imagery holds several clear connections to the world and story of *Shadow of the Colossus*, particularly its voice-in-the-ceiling trickster antagonist, Dormin. The timeline on which the three games take place is much less clear, beyond *ICO* seemingly taking place sometime after *Shadow of the Colossus*, which appeared to kick off the genesis of a long line of horned children. *The Last Guardian* may take place eons before or after the others for all we know, but that speculation is just part of the fun.

On the following pages, we'll summarize the stories of both *ICO* and *Shadow of the Colossus*, to provide even more context for some of the things you'll experience in *The Last Guardian*, in case you've never played them before (tragic!) or just need a refresher.



Shadow of the Colossus





ICO

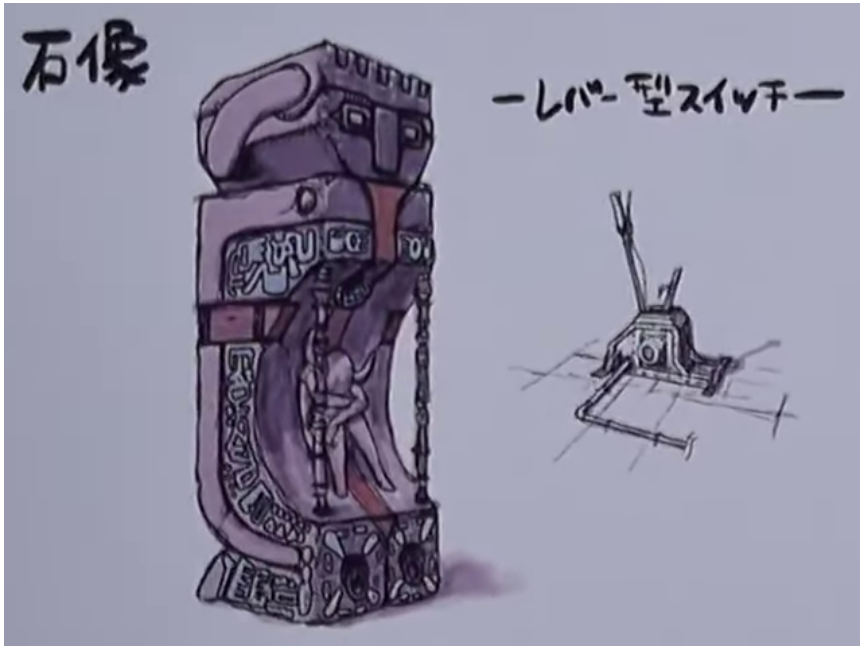
2001 PlayStation®2

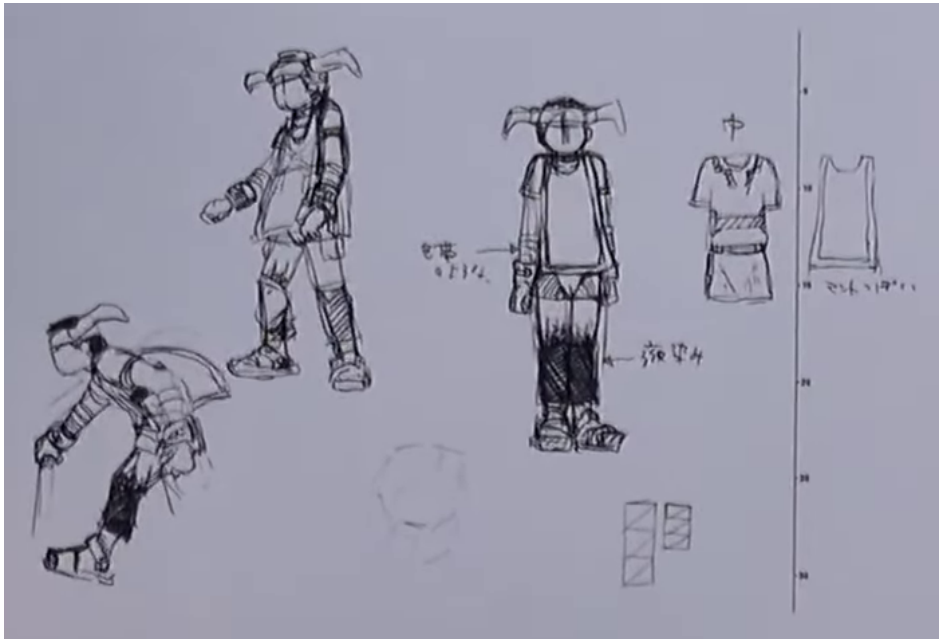
A touching, elegant new standard for minimalist game design and storytelling, Fumito Ueda’s debut masterpiece influenced countless developers to come and changed the video game industry in subtle but important ways. A game about holding hands, about connecting with an AI character in ways tangible yet wordless.

ICO tells the story of a young boy—the eponymous Ico—outcast and sacrificed by his village for a set of horns that sprouts from his head. “This is for the good of the village” a group of men tell him as they seal him inside a coffin, deep within the bowels of the remote castle that they’ve brought him to.

Staging an escape once they’re gone, Ico finds himself alone in the endless, creaking corridors of the castle, braziers burning for no one. He soon stumbles across Yorda, a ghostly young girl, held captive in another part of the castle, in a cage high atop a cylindrical room. After freeing her, he discovers that she speaks in an alien language, and possesses the ability to open gates throughout the castle with a strange energy that emanates from her body.

Together, Ico and Yorda must journey wordlessly through the castle, navigating its many puzzles and obstacles while relying on one another for support, both physical and emotional. Yorda treads tentatively, but Ico can call to her, or take her hand at any moment and help lead her to safety. Ico must fight for her, too, as every so often the pair will encounter small hordes of shadow creatures, skittering and strange, who seek to capture Yorda and drag her through a seeping portal of darkness on the floor. Some are human-like, with piercing blue eyes shining through the black, gaseous mass of their bodies, while others are larger with wings and horns, or smaller and spider-like.

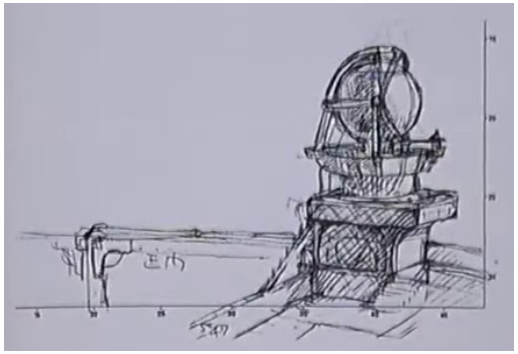




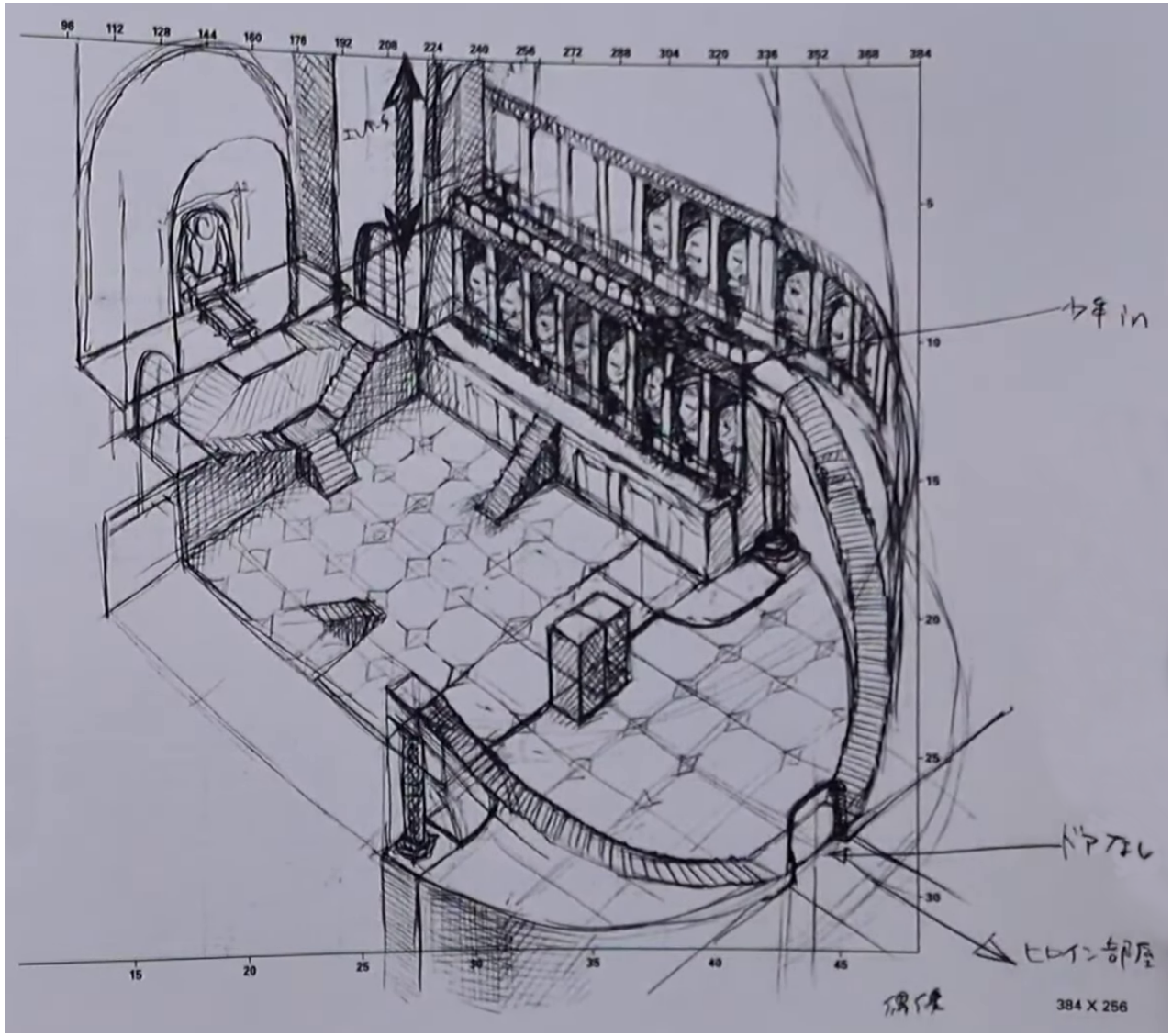
We are also introduced to Yorda's forbidding mother, the Queen, seemingly the ruler of this ancient place and master of the shadow creatures, herself clad in a robe of shifting darkness. She tells Ico to leave her daughter alone before disappearing, leaving a warning ringing in their ears: "Yorda, why can't you understand? You cannot survive in the outside world."

Still the pair journey on, through peaceful paddocks, along treacherous scaffolding, and past arcane mechanisms, all the while keeping the shadow creatures at bay. After managing to open the main gates of the castle grounds, they begin to cross the bridge that connects it to the outside world. The bridge begins to separate though, dividing the pair; Ico tries to leap across the gap to safety, and is caught by Yorda in a beautiful, iconic moment of role reversal as she becomes the savior. Though it doesn't last long, as the Queen appears and envelops Yorda's body in darkness, causing her to let go of Ico who plummets towards the waters far below.

Ico wakes up intact after a lucky landing, and must journey back into the castle to find Yorda. He eventually arrives in the room in which he was first imprisoned, rows of others' coffins lining the walls, now glowing with patterned ruins. Yorda is there too, turned to stone and protected by dozens of horned shadow creatures—near-doppelgangers of Ico, perhaps the souls of other horned children who weren't so lucky. Ico defeats the creatures, and journeys forth to face the Queen in her throne room.



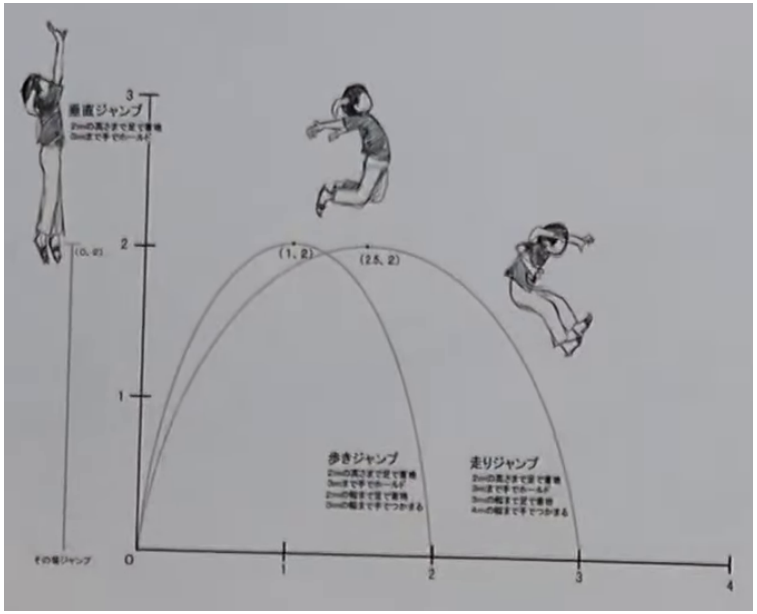
As the first release in Ueda's spiritual trilogy—and well before anyone knew that it would be part of one—*ICO*'s fairytale of otherworldly companionship could only be taken at face value, despite the endless questions that its sparse story introduced. Why were the horned boys sacrificed, entombed in the castle and left to die? Who exactly was the Queen, and why was she so insistent on Yorda being kept under lock and key? Where did their mystical powers come from? What was the true significance of the shadow creatures?



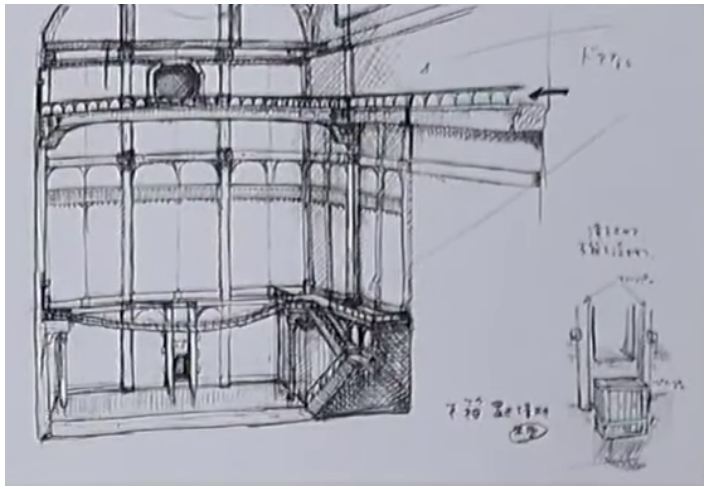
My body has become too old," the Queen tells Ico, "But Yorda is going to grant me the power to be resurrected." Ico won't stand for this of course, and battles the Queen to her death. He loses both of his horns in the fight and is knocked unconscious, and in her dying breath the Queen releases a shockwave that begins the final destruction of the castle. Yorda is reanimated, her body now composed wholly of shadow and crackling energy, and carries Ico to safety, setting him adrift in a boat as the castle collapses around her.

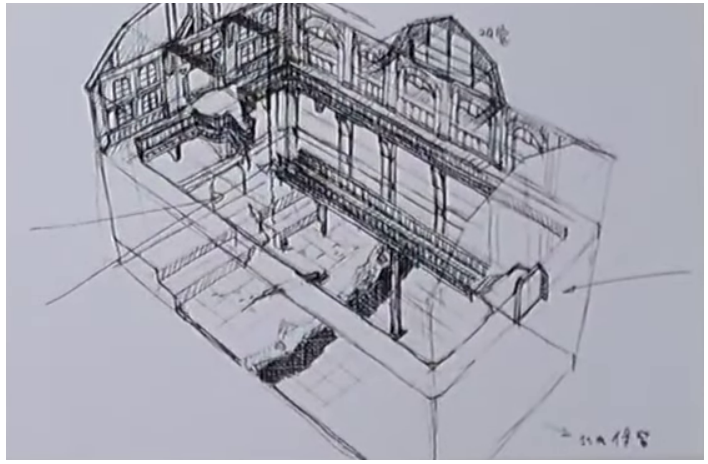
Some time later, Ico awakes to the sounds of waves crashing softly, his boat washed ashore on a long, bright beach. He explores the shoreline, eventually finding the body of Yorda washed up in the tide, a warm humanity restored to her complexion. Her eyes flutter awake, she whispers something, and the game ends.

(There's also an especially touching alternate ending, removed from the U.S. release, in which Ico can bring a watermelon from a nearby patch to Yorda, and the two will sit eating watermelon in the tide.)

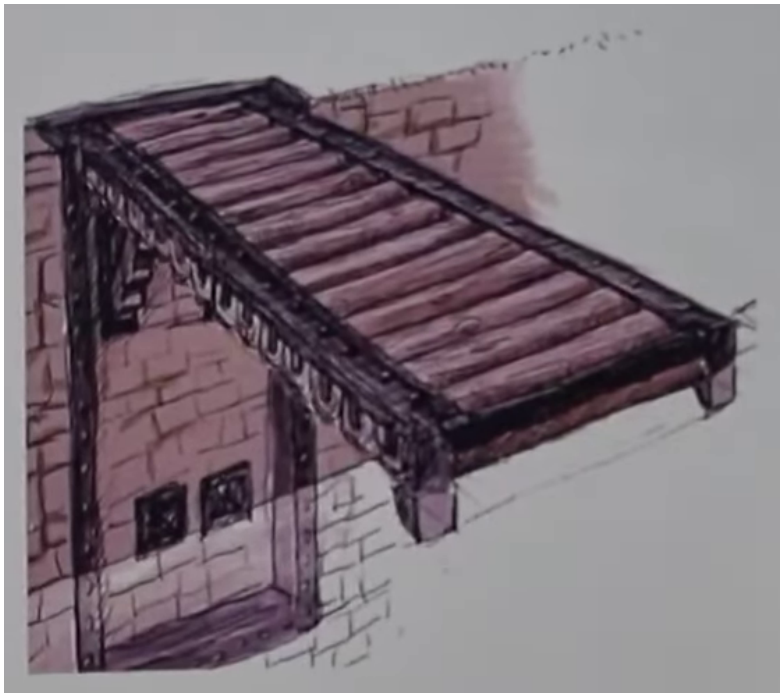


The companionship with Trico is joyful, independent, and even devastating by the end, as it was with Yorda and Agro in their respective games—they are a constant in each other's lives, a bond strengthened by a mutual mission. They are symbols of stories told through the power of interaction, of bonding with a fictional character in ways unique to video games: taking Yorda's hand, steering Agro between the legs of a towering colossus, catching Trico's tail after a treacherous jump. They also make sacrifices for one another, as true companions do; in each game, the AI companion sacrifices their lives to save the life of the player character (though thankfully, it is eventually revealed that each survives).





We never learn much about the broader human culture of the three games' worlds, but one prevailing theme is that of sacrifice. Ico is sacrificed because he has horns, 'for the good of the village,' his captors tell him. Wander tells Dormin something similar of Mono: "She was sacrificed for she had a cursed fate." In *The Last Guardian*, the tricos raid nearby villages, devouring their denizens only to regurgitate the bodies back at the Nest, sacrifices for the Core (which reciprocates by providing food). 'Be among the chosen ones,' one villager says of the Boy, perhaps expressing his people's view on those that are taken.



Shadow of the Colossus

2005 PlayStation®2

On the surface, *Shadow of the Colossus* is as bombastic as *ICO* is understated, an epic adventure fighting a gauntlet of towering titans whose very bodies serve as the 'levels.' And while that holds true for portions of gameplay, *Shadow of the Colossus* also shares the core narrative themes of *ICO*—companionship and sacrifice—approaching them from different but equally interesting perspectives.

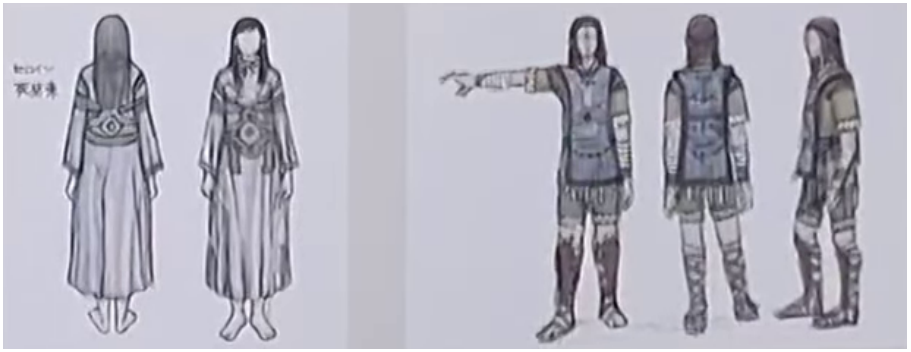
The game opens as a lone rider—Wander—winds his way along cliffsides, across plains, and through forests, atop his beautiful black mare, Agro. They eventually arrive at one end of a massive bridge, spanning a huge expanse below them—the Forbidden Lands—seemingly frozen in time. And in the center, at the other end of a bridge, a towering, multi-leveled structure, the Shrine of Worship. The pair cross the bridge, enter the Shrine, and descend down a tall, cylindrical room, passing a shallow, circular pool at the bottom and a hallway of sixteen beastly stone idols. An altar lies at the end, and we see that Wander was transporting a most precious cargo: the body of a girl—Mono—unmoving and enrobed in white, which Wander places on the altar.

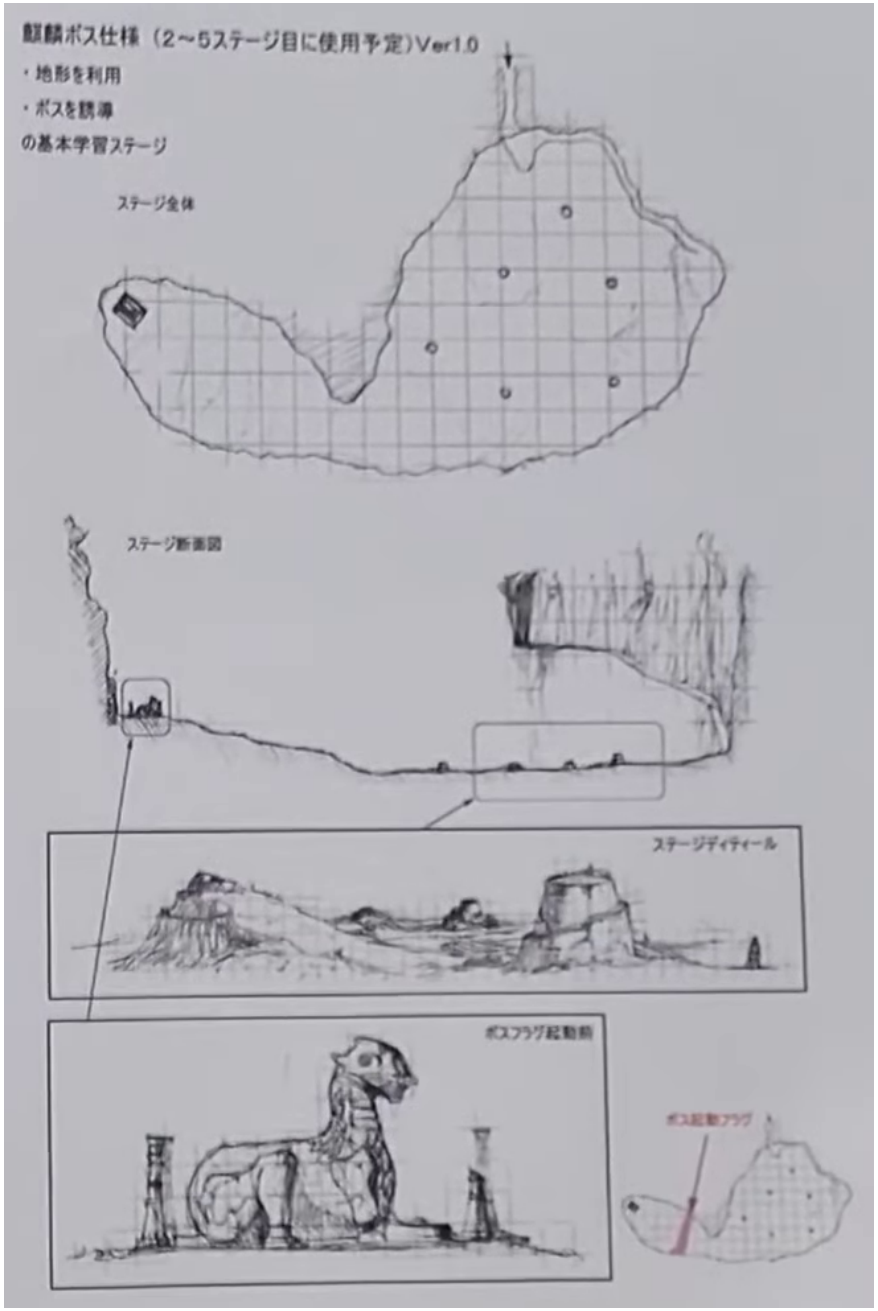
A vision of a shaman in Wander's village is seen, telling how one can "bring back the souls of the dead" within the Forbidden Lands. The vision ends, just as several shadowy creatures emerge from the ground near Wander. Tough as quickly as they arrived, Wander dissolves the creatures simply by unsheathing his sword and letting its energy reverberate towards them. In doing so, he awakens something far more powerful, as thunder crackles in the sky above. A booming disembodied voice fills the Shrine—that of Dormin, the entity that Wander has come seeking. Wander asks that Dormin bring Mono back to life. "With that sword," Dormin muses, "it may not be impossible." And so a deal is struck; in exchange for Mono's life, Wander must destroy the sixteen beastly idols that line the hall by killing their physical incarnations that live throughout the Lands.

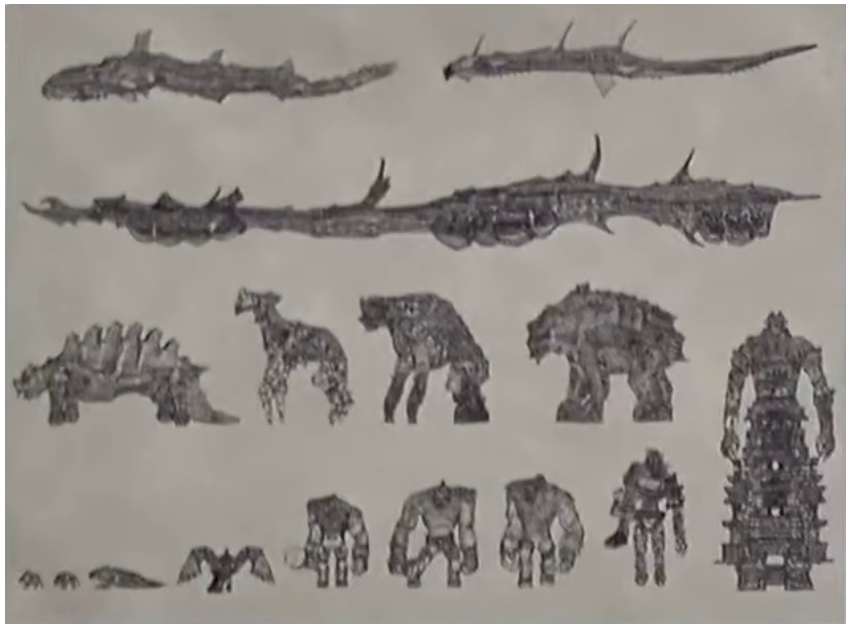
And thus starts the adventure, Wander riding Agro far and wide to find the Colossi, battling them in their lairs—from cat-and-mouse chases to thrilling airborne clashes—and ultimately destroying them. Upon delivering the final blow upon each—presented as a dour, holy occasion—Wander is both impaled and enveloped by the inky shadows that bleed from the bodies of the behemoths. He is transported back to the Shrine, where he is watched by shadowed forms as he sleeps—one for each Colossus he has felled.

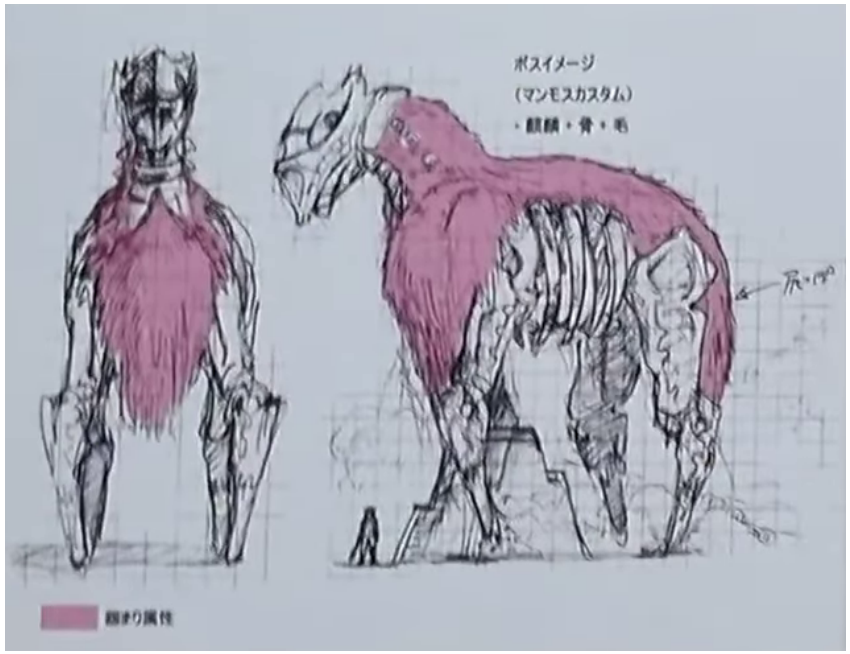
Each time Wander wakes, his appearance is more ragged, his complexion pallid and darker. And so the cycle continues, as Wander works his way through each foe. After twelve Colossi, we are shown that riders are coming, led by Lord Emon, the shaman from Wander's vision. Later, on the way to the final Colossus, Agro must jump from a collapsing bridge to assure that Wander lands safely, but doesn't make the jump herself, plummeting far below. Heartbroken, Wander must venture on to the final encounter, a breathtaking climax with his most imposing foe yet, set against a rising storm.

Lord Emon and his company reach the Shrine too late, as the final idol collapses into rubble. Suddenly Wander is with them, surrounded by shadowed forms, staggering to his feet as Lord Emon berates him for stealing the sword and trespassing upon this land. "You were only being used," Emon tells him. Dark lines snake up Wander's skin, his eyes wild: two small horns sprout from his head.







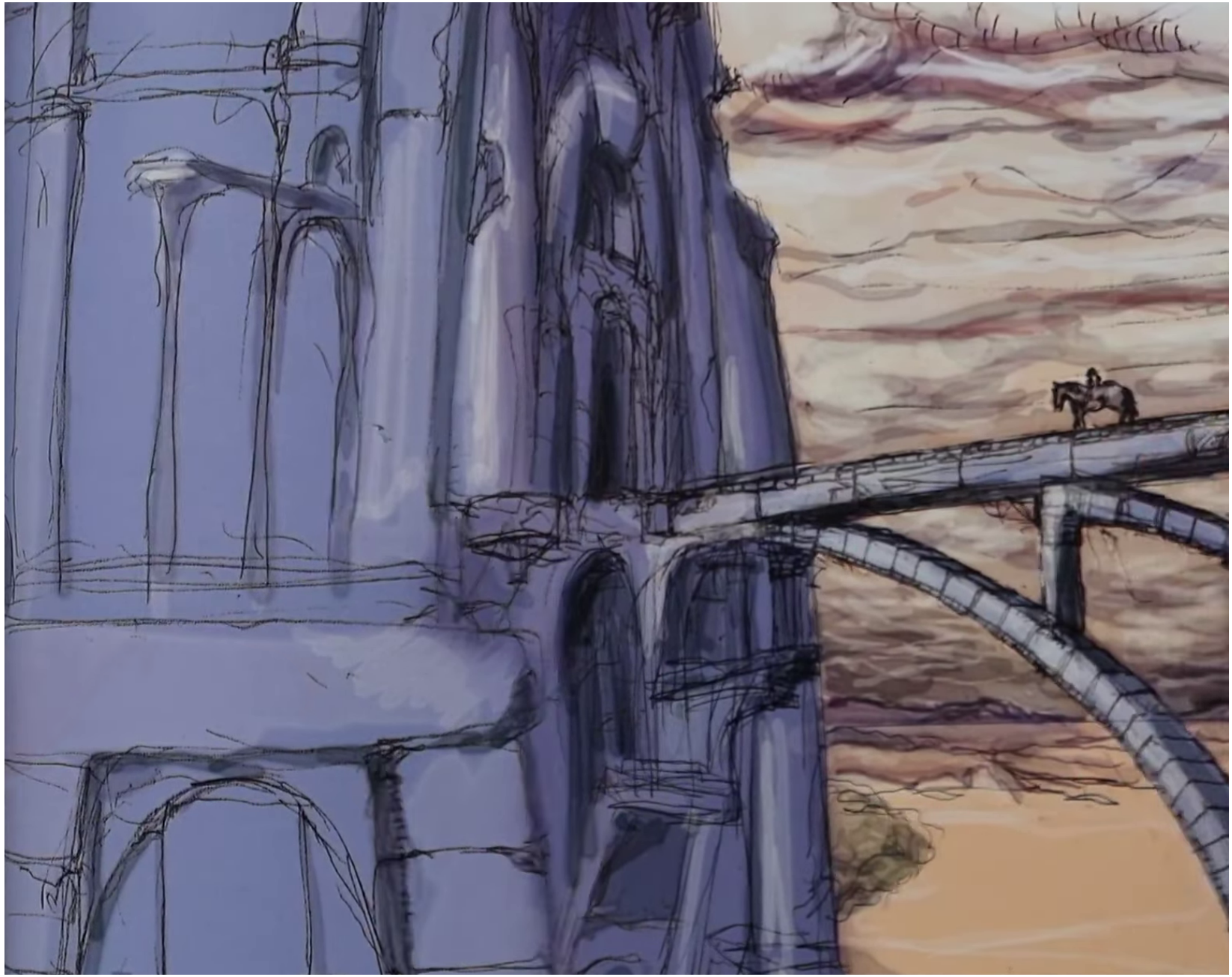


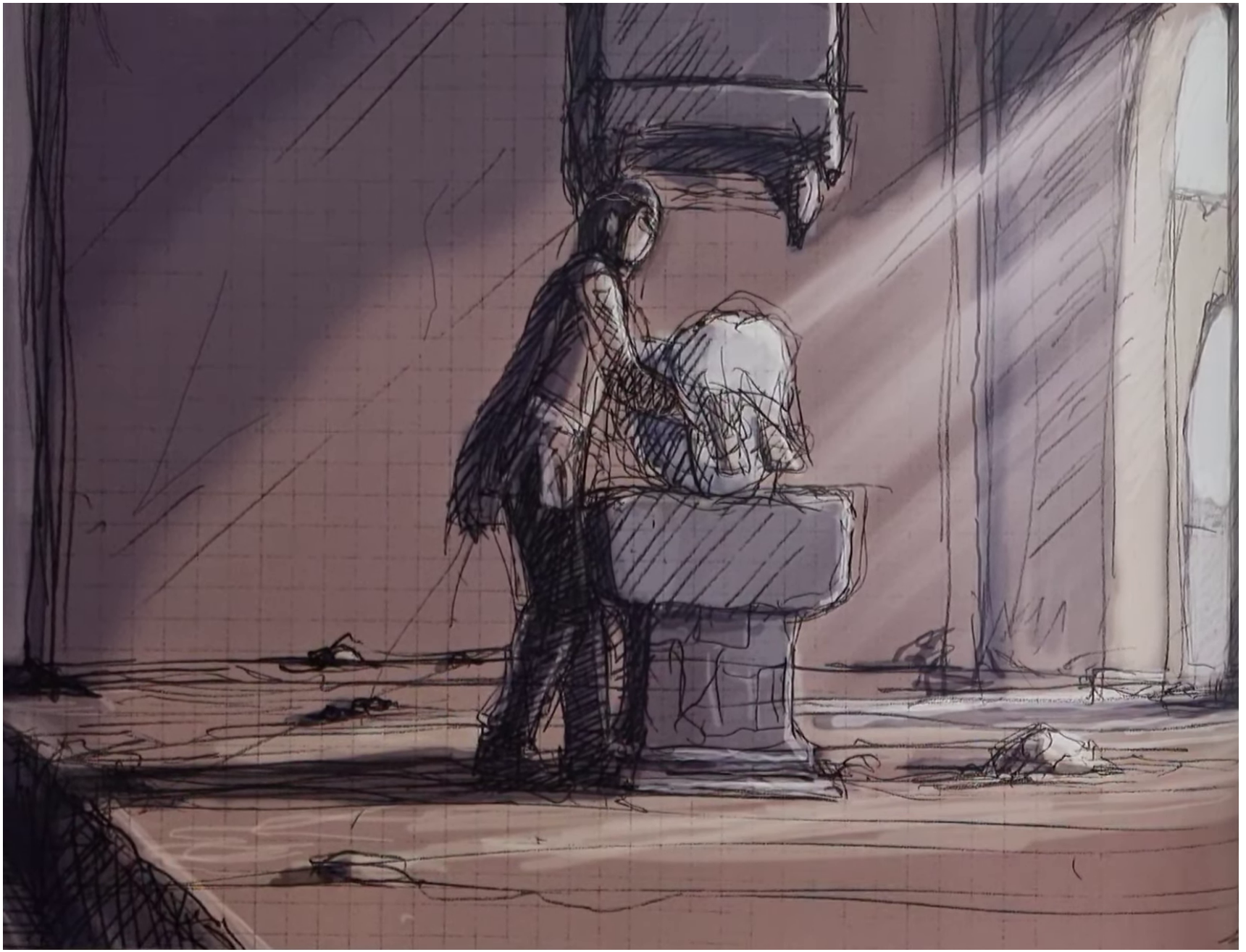
Upon his instruction, Lord Emon's men down Wander with a crossbow, then drive a sword deep into his chest. All is quiet for a moment, before Wander struggled to his feet once more and extracts the sword from his body. The shadowed forms merge with Wander, now Dormin resurrected, growing huge and horned, insect-like legs sprouting from his back. "Thou severed Our body into sixteen segments for an eternity in order to seal away Our power… We, Dormin, have arisen anew…"

Emon's men flee from the Shrine, peppering Dormin with crossbow bolts. The player takes control of Dormin, an all-powerful force made awkward and slow against his tiny, more maneuverable foes. Before he exits, Emon casts Wander's stolen sword into the shallow pool near the entrance, uttering a spell to banish Dormin. The pool glows brightly before creating a whirlwind of energy, sucking Dormin's presence out of Wander. At the end only Wander remains, albeit still shrouded in darkness, as he's drawn into the swirling waters of the pool, the whirlwind going with him.

Outside, Emon and his men ride across the great bridge, though it crumbles and falls behind them as they do, sealing the Lands off from the outside world. "One day, perhaps you will make atonement for what you've done," Emon remarks in a eulogy to Wander.

The castles and ruins that comprise much of the landscape of each game seem to share the same ancient architects, as recurring shapes and patterns can be seen throughout. Bridges play a critical role in all three games, while other imagery like windmills, spiraling staircases in cylindrical rooms, and the aforementioned circular pool find overlap between different pairs of games.

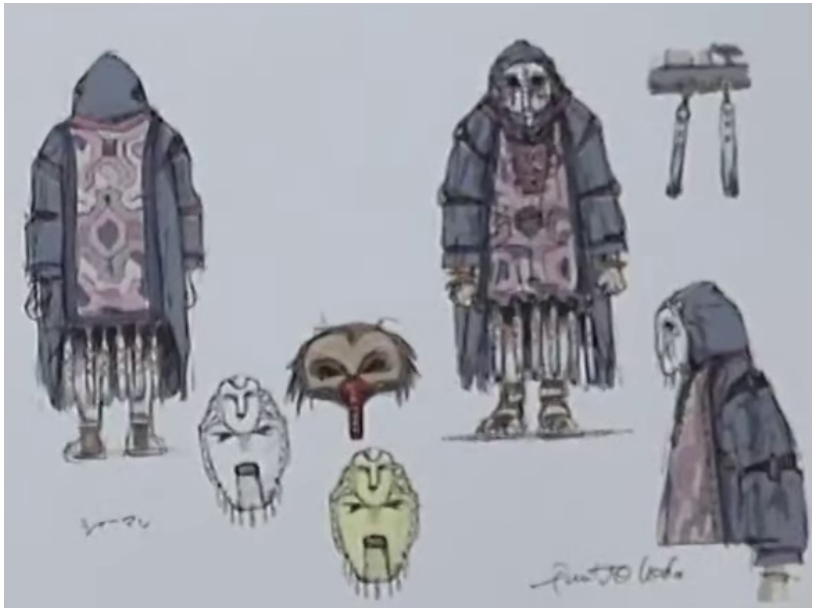


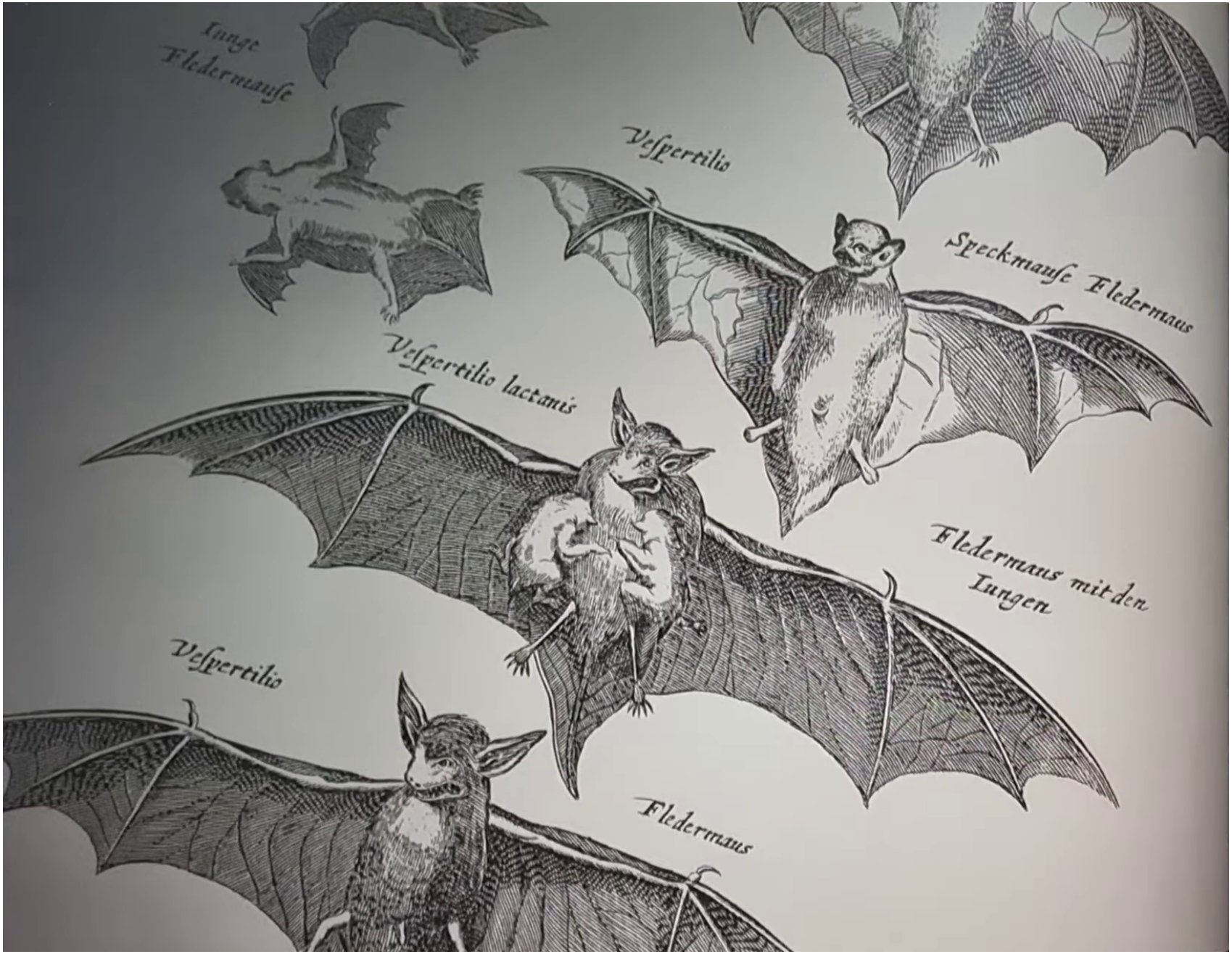


Dormin’s promise has been kept though, as Mono stirs awake on her altar, oblivious to the events that have transpired around her. As she stands, Agro comes limping in—injured but alive, as both survivors take a moment to relish their good fortune together. They make their way to the back of the Shrine, only to find something curious in the shallow pool—a small horned baby, crying softly. Mono picks up the child, and follows Agro up a nearby staircase.

Once they find that the bridge has been destroyed, they ascend the Shrine further, to a serene garden at the very top. They find a few woodland creatures living there, rare signs of life in a largely barren land.

The game ends as a hawk soars into the sky, as different weather—or seasons, perhaps—cycles through, time flowing in the Lands once more.

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AN INTERVIEW WITH FUMITO UEDA CHAPTER | 07

An Interview with | Fumito Ueda

On his oeuvre

Would you call your games a trilogy?

I'm not really too clear on what 'trilogy' [Ed. Note: in Japanese 'sanbusaku,' or, a 'work in three parts'] means, but there is a meaning of having 'an ending' in there and I'm not sure I have a sense of that. I've always considered each work an act of tuning the previous ones, and I want to keep making games using the skills developed in previous ones.

Do you feel that with *The Last Guardian*, you've now fully explored the element of human relationships through your games?

Honestly, I haven't considered what's next, but if I had to say why I've focused on the communication between player characters vs. NPCs… I used to be involved with film and art, and having entered the videogame world, I've been thinking about what I previously couldn't express via those mediums. Among those things would be a game with an AI character—something you can't do in a movie or in music or novels or manga.

What stands out to you the most about your previous games?

Whenever I finish a game, there's always a period of reflection and realization of what I had wanted to do differently: *ICO* and *Shadow of the Colossus* were that way, and *The Last Guardian* will be too. But with *ICO* and *Shadow of the Colossus* a lot of time has passed. Between the two of them, I have more of an attachment to *ICO*, it being the first game I made. Even now I still feel emotional talking about it. From a visual perspective, even though a lot of time has passed, I think the games hold up fairly well. At the time we didn't use a lot of cutting-edge tools for shading and textures, and therefore the games don't end up looking dates.

What draws you to the aesthetic of ruinous, crumbling worlds?

Well, it's fairly simple. I was thinking about the limitations of level design, and it ended up being in those bridges or those ruins. I thought about things from a player's perspective and adjusted my designs to what was really needed. For example, if the player wants to get to a high place, they first need to get through this narrow place, or they need a bridge. Or places where the player would want a staircase, and instead it's destroyed. I neither love those things nor hate them—it's not that I have as strong a desire to express a ruined world as everyone thinks I do.

'Sacrifice' seems to be an important theme in all three of your games—what does this theme mean to you?

I personally don't like games with a lot of characters. They just become unreal. In pursuit of something real, as much as possible I try to keep [a lot of] NPCs from being introduced. The works where sacrifice strikes home the most to me are those that introduce only a few characters. When you have NPCs repeating the same lines over and over again to the player character, their existence ends up becoming shallow. I think people all over the world have felt a sense of sacrifice at some point or another. Sacrifice is a common understanding, and even without a detailed explanation, all humans can feel it. So, I've tried to use that sense of universal human understanding.

Is having a large cast of NPCs a design limitation in terms of expressing human relations?

Well certainly limiting the cast of characters helps when you have to consider the limitations on resources and hardware. Including a lot of characters to bring a sense of a reality to a world is one approach, but for the sense of reality I'm looking for in characters, having to flesh out a huge cast with different text and actions can easily get out of control.

On genDESIGN

Was genDESIGN founded with any kind of philosophy or along any ideological principles?

We have this on our website, but we want to make games with 'ejikara' [Ed. Note: a recent neologism meaning literally, 'picture-power']: Games whose visuals are masterful. So we are looking for people who have a deep sense of beauty. We're a studio that wants to make visuals that immediately communicate the appeal of the game.

Are there other studios that you look to or that have inspired you?

Well, I'd like to end up leaving a lot of the actual work to the team. But when I founded this studio I was talking with Horagai, and we were thinking about car companies—not car manufacturers, but automobile design companies like Italdesign and Pininfarina, for example. They don't just design the exterior, but all of the inner parts too. It's not quite the mass production part, but the core that focuses on the design. I was thinking about making a studio like that.

So you'd imagine a future with partnerships with other teams?

Yes, exactly. But there is a possibility we'd add to our team if there's the need to do so.

Could you talk about the genDESIGN logo? Did you design it?

I did design it. We had a lot of variations while designing it, but *ICO* is the main inspiration for it and we just left it that way. It feels a lot like a game, very puzzle-like with character movements reminiscent of a game. The pattern on the logo is a bit like the ones that you see in *ICO*, *Shadow of the Colossus*, and *The Last Guardian*.

How about the name genDESIGN?

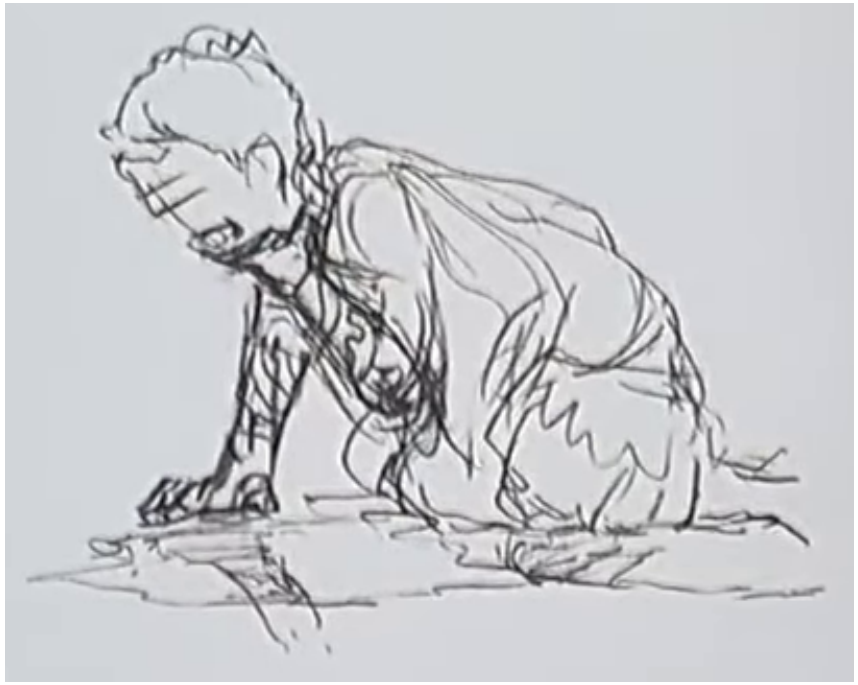
Obviously there's the way the name sounds, but the 'gen' has the meanings of 'generate,' 'gentle,' 'gender'… Words that have 'gen' in them just sound good for projects, so that was chosen.

How has working with Horagai-san and other longer-term partners changed over the last several projects?

The biggest change is that during *ICO* and *Shadow of the Colossus* I was really directly involved with a lot of the nitty-gritty stuff like motions and modeling. With *The Last Guardian*, I am of course doing a portion of that work, but it's completely different than the hands-on involvement of the previous games. At genDESIGN I have a motion director, an art director—key people who I can delegate some of that work to. That's the biggest change.

We've seen that you like to use a lot of hand-drawn sketches, etc. Do you prefer these non-digital methods?

I like doing things digitally. I don't actually like doing things on paper, and only do so when there's a necessity. As much as possible, I don't want to draw things. I started out doing computer graphics. My skills lie in that area, in CG and animation. So working in a digital environment is much more fun for me. I originally used an Amiga computer, and I used software called *LightWave 3D*. It's not used much in game design anymore, but it was the software I was most familiar with and easy to use, and I used its tools quite a bit for *ICO* and *Shadow of the Colossus*. With *The Last Guardian*, we've moved onto *Maya*, which I can't really use myself, and so for that



reason I've used [hand-drawn] pictures to help explain my thoughts to the team.

Why skip the detailed concept art that many other studios create?

This is just me speaking right now, but I don't really see the point of it. It's a bit like what I was saying about why I choose ruins and bridges. Even if you have such great art, when you translate it into the game, not much of it is useful. It ends up having to fit into the constraints of the game. Focusing on the art is difficult, but focusing on the levels and building from there makes for a better game.

On The Last Guardian

How did the story change over development? Is it close to the original vision?

It stayed basically the same. It didn't begin with a detailed story, but just broad strokes of the plot. Then we built a more detailed story considering what behaviors we could design for Trico and the emotions we could express. So the plot stayed the same, but we hadn't started with a very detailed story to begin with. So it both changed and didn't change.

Was there some basic concept you wanted to communicate via *The Last Guardian*, just as *Shadow of the Colossus* was all about boss fights and *ICO* about a shorter boy and a taller girl?

The visual image was of a gigantic monster or animal that the player clung to, and that animal was on some sort of narrow foothold. I chose this theme because of Agro [Ed. Note: the horse from *Shadow of the Colossus*], who we didn't actually think the players would have much emotional investment in. But it turned out that when Agro fell in the story, the players were sad, and when Agro turned out to be alive, people were relieved. It was a much bigger reaction than we had expected. So it seemed like we should make a title centered around that kind of theme.

Did any parts of *The Last Guardian's* world exist while *Shadow of the Colossus* was being developed?

It all came to me after *Shadow of the Colossus* was finished.

Were there things that you had wanted to do with previous games that you couldn't, which instead made their way into *The Last Guardian*?

There are several. For example, thinking back on *Shadow of the Colossus*, the opening was fairly long. From the time you hit the start button a long time passes until you can actually control the character, so with *The Last Guardian* we wanted you to be able to start the game fairly quickly. Even though it has the title '*Wander and the Colossi*' [Ed. Note: the game's Japanese name], it's a long time before you find a Colossus. So with '*Trico*' [Ed. Note: part of the game's Japanese name] we wanted you to hit the start button and there's Trico. That was a big one.

As for *ICO*, you have a human partner, a girl character. There is something attractive about having a human character, but humans have physical limitations that inhibit level design and would make creating certain types of puzzles very difficult and just not very believable. Making Trico into a large animal was a way to overcome that limitation.

What areas did you focus on the most to develop the relationship between the Boy and Trico? What design elements helped to express that relationship?

From a level design perspective, both of them need each other to get through the levels. We made it so that with only one of the characters you wouldn't be able to progress through the game, that there are levels that you can't clear without cooperation. Also, Trico is such a big creature, and we wanted to use that mass well, like using the creature to help stomp down and propel the player to a greater height. That image was there from the start. And with animals, emotion is easier to read, unlike with humans, whose emotions are a bit harder to visually express. Also the physical expressions of those emotions are easier to achieve with animals or monsters, by showing big actions that humans wouldn't express.

Where did the English title *The Last Guardian* come from? Who is the last guardian?

Who the last guardian is is more of a mystery, but you can come up with a lot of ideas. The title itself has been around for a long time from the American side, and it was eventually decided to keep it that way. We had thought to make it closer to the Japanese title, but the Americans asked for a simpler title and so it became *The Last Guardian*.

Thinking about subtractive design [a school of design that Ueda is known for], it seems like there are fewer unused materials in *The Last Guardian* than your previous games. Could you talk about that?

There are a lot of things we cut, but compared to earlier games, there are a lot of things we've added in. The reason for this is that the players who really enjoyed *ICO* and *Shadow of the Colossus* were the type who really enjoyed putting their imagination into the game, but this time around we wanted to appeal to a wider audience and put more information into the game. But not so much information that players of *ICO* and *Shadow of the Colossus* would think it's too much.

Both *ICO* and *Shadow of the Colossus* were more about wordless communication, whereas *The Last Guardian* has a narrator that explains things more literally. Besides its use as a hint system, what was the reason for that?

In the age in which Trico would exist, imaginary beasts like dragons and griffins would exist. We wanted to create a new type of mythical creature, but someone would need to explain to the audience what the nature of that creature is. We thought about including various characters who would fulfill that role, but the most natural choice became narration. This isn't the first time we've used narration though. In *Shadow of the Colossus* during the boss battles there was narration, a sort of voice from the heavens. I kind of considered them as similar functions.

Has the story element of the grown-up boy functioning as the narrator always been there?

Yes it has.

With *The Last Guardian*, did the vision of the world come to you early on? Or did it develop as you were creating the game?

ICO and '*Trico*' are the same in this regard. I created all of these separate spaces, and then thought of what would make those spaces interesting as levels. When I had a few of these places, I put them all together into one piece. Then for each level tried to figure out if they belonged in the earlier half of the game or the later. By doing that gradually I ended up seeing what the world looked like. *ICO*'s castle was that way and so is *Trico*'s Valley.

What was the earliest thing you remember working on with *The Last Guardian*? What was the very last thing you finished?

That was so long ago I'm not sure I remember… But the first level I designed was the one we showed at E3 last year, the one with the bridge and where you jump and grab hold of the tail. Probably the last thing I did in development was drawing the pictures for the manual. For the game itself, there were just some adjustments to design. The Trophy icons maybe.

Was that scene from the E3 demo something you had sketched out on paper in the past?

Yes I had. For that level we put down on paper, in a lot of detail, the movements of that space. Now that I think about it, very early on I was designing Trico's legs, and wondering what level of detail I could put in.

We heard [from your team] that the Boy's sitting animation came very late in the game and that it was your idea?

Oh, yeah, that's right. Why did I add that? Well, a lot of media outlets want screengrabs of the game, but the Boy is often just standing there so we wanted something a bit more performative as a visual. In terms of game progress there's no real effect, but pushing the button and having him do that felt fun.

How did your personal relationship with Trico change over time? Do you think of it as a pet?

I do have that feeling. It has been a long time and I've worked hard on development, so precisely because we've been together for that long, I have an attachment to Trico. But it wasn't a project that went very smoothly and there were some really bitter parts. Both of those feelings are intermingled, when I think of Trico as a living creature. It's not just a sense of 'it's cute.' It's almost like the things I've experienced, the challenges in this project, are a result of Trico.

Do you have a real life pet?

[I don't have one but] my family has a cat now, and when I was a child we had a lot of pets. Not just dogs and cats, but animals you don't find in a normal house: ducks, a squirrel monkey, rabbits, snakes. The monkey lived in the house in a cage, though.

How did you approach designing the anatomy of Trico? Did it end up much different than you had originally envisioned?

It didn't change much. Details like the length of the tail and the look of the feathers and the look of the eyes did change, but the broad strokes stayed the same. I had always known what kind of creature I wanted to make. I also announced the game very early so I couldn't make that many changes either.

Regarding the Yoroi, we see them when the Boy is around or when Trico is injured. What other tasks do they do otherwise?

There may not be much for them to do in the Valley, but they do have a maintenance function. They do have some sense of consciousness, but of course they are also controllable via antenna using their horns.

What is the significance of the tattoos?

Normally, the tattoos start spreading after being swallowed by a trico, as if the human has been transformed into some different type of substance. But Trico was struck by lightning and the Boy was spat out before he could be fully transformed into that substance. Each time he's touched by the Yoroi or swallowed by Trico, that transformation continues a bit.

Could you explain the workings behind the transformation of children into the barrels and their use in rewarding the tricos?

It's not just the barrels themselves that matter for the tricos. The chosen ones aren't transformed into barrels, but into something much more important, and as a byproduct, the stuff that's in the barrels is produced. It is probably related to the mist that comes from the pots, and the energy that powers the Yoroi, but at first I was thinking about the sarcophagus in the mirror room, and that energy being used to revive or bring to life whatever is in it.

Does the mirror room have any relationship to other games, like *Shadow of the Colossus*?

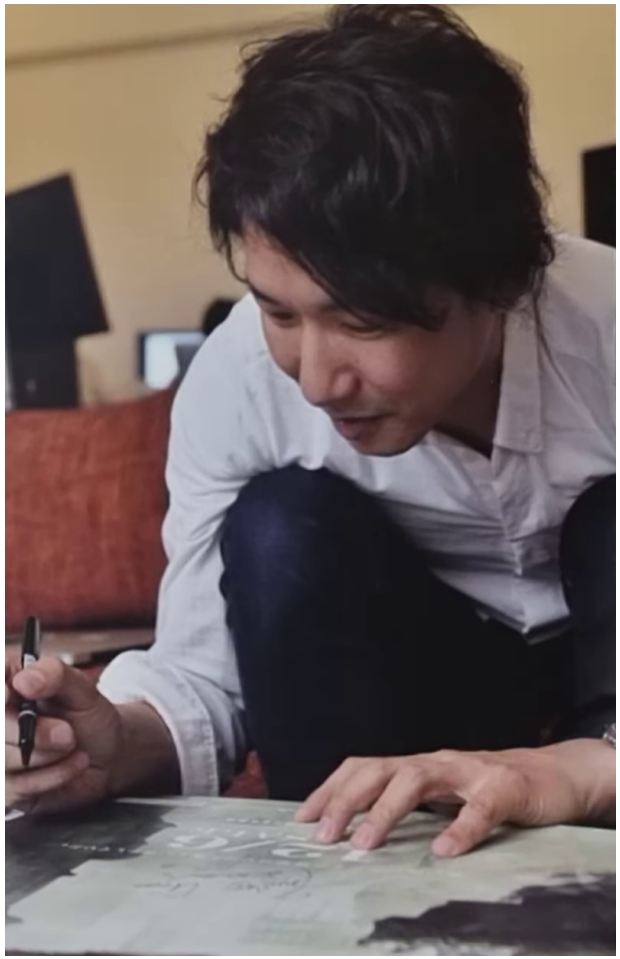
It's not that it connects *The Last Guardian* and *Shadow of the Colossus* directly, but the spring there is a thing like the Mirror, and the underside of the Mirror could be connected to the world on the other side of the pool. Another world could exist on the other side, though…maybe it's a world of things that haven't happened, or maybe it is the world of *Shadow of the Colossus.*… You can think about what it means.

There have been many games over the past 10 years—such as *Limbo* and *Dark Souls*—for which you've been cited as an inspiration. Have you in turn been inspired by any of these games?

Certainly there are recent games I've been inspired by. Games like *Limbo* and *Inside*. As for games like *Dark Souls* and *Bloodborne*, they're rather difficult for me. But even though they are hard, they have a lot of fans, and that fact itself has had an influence on me.

Do you feel like you'd like a rest, or are you eager to start a new project?

For the time being, I'd like to take a break. At this point, I don't want to look at any other game or even *The Last Guardian*, or get involved in any other kind of entertainment. I'd like to go somewhere completely separate from the work I've been doing. I've been so involved with making things for so long that I'd like to get away from it, even if it's just for a moment. By the time this book is out, I think I'll be recharged.



THE LAST GUARDIAN: AN EXTRAORDINARY STORY

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Germany

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Special thanks to Fumito Ueda, Jinji Horagai and the team at genDESIGN for treating us like family during our visit at their studio. It was an inspiring time and a pleasure working with you.

Further special thanks to the team at SIE JAPAN Studio, Koji Kanai and Megumi Hayasaka from Sony Interactive Entertainment—we are very grateful for your tremendous support and supervision. And to Ryan Payton! Without your love and support, this book would have never happened—thank you!

Greetings and thanks to Dais Kawaguchi, George Weising, and Aram Jabbari, from SIE America, and Claire Coopland and David Evans from SIE Europe!

Greetings to our friends Bruce Byrne, Lucas Hofstatter, Ryan Brunski, Jonathan Gagné, Marcus Sanders, Saurian Dash, Daniel Strauss, Sven Kanth, David Waybright, Anwar Hassan, Nomad, Alex Robertson, Jane Best, Paul Anderson.
Much love to Amber Cox, Kathleen & Patrick Murray, Ulrike Krumbügel (marry me, Uli?), Jim & Caitlin Murray, Grit, Jil & Emmie Preuss, Katja, Alex & Lea Glaser.

For more writing on Fumito Ueda's work by Nick Suttner, check out *Shadow of the Colossus* by Boss Fight Books (www.bossfightbooks.com).